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GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

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GEORGE BERNARD SHAW

A CRITICAL STUDY

BY

JOSEPH McCABE

AUTHOR OF

'GOETHE,' 'TALLEYRAND,' 'THE EMPRESSES OF ROME'
ETC.

WITH A PORTRAIT FRONTISPICE

LONDON

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PREFACE

A FEW years ago I was invited to break a courteous lance with Mr G. K. Chesterton. The ensuing experience—the uncomfortable feeling that one was wasting good blows on a display of fireworks—is instinctively recalled by an invitation to discuss Mr G. B. Shaw. One needs, however, little acquaintance with the two to discover a large and important difference. In Chesterton's work it is difficult to dissociate the wit from the thought ; in Shaw the pyrotechnic element is but the advertisement of a very serious and original view of life, which existed before the humour, and can easily be formulated apart from it. The common habit of linking the names of the two humorists as " birds of paradox " is unsound. Paradox is truth disguised as untruth ; and the disguise must be something subtler than exaggeration and more frivolous than honest error. But most of what is regarded as paradox in Shaw's personal expressions is either a strategical exaggeration of what he believes to be a fact or a sincere conviction which is so unusual as to seem insincere.

Shaw has a set of entirely original first principles, and these send their branching arteries through the whole mass of his publications and pronouncements. You find him making some puzzling statement to an

interviewer or in a letter to the Press, or you hear him amuse an audience with what are called Shavian paradoxes, and you conclude that he is merely sustaining the character of Jester Laureate which the age has thrust on him. In all probability he was as serious as the Bishop of London. Many a jester of ancient times had a sharp and penetrative wit, and shook his bells only for the purpose of distracting attention at the time from the deliberate, if not malicious, aim of his shaft. Not otherwise would his words ever have reached the ears of princes. So Shaw retired from his first unsuccessful assault on the ears of King Demos, to return with the cap and bells and be installed with honour. Take him seriously ! It is precisely a part of the Shavian entertainment, which in the last ten years has added to the gaiety of every civilised nation, that there are dull folk who are seduced into taking him seriously. So even learned critics say.

Does Shaw desire us to take him seriously ? It is characteristic of the subtle and elusive policy of the man that he is saying what he conceives to be the most serious things in the world, and trusts that they will eventually be recognised as such, but does not wish the majority of people to take him seriously. Otherwise they would not listen to him at all. Some day, when the laughter is forgotten, when the burlesque has dropped out of consciousness, he trusts that the idea will return and irritate, if not convince. To have merely amused his generation he would regard as a

tragic and criminal prostitution of a great power. He is a man of the most austere sentiments and lofty ideals. No man was ever more anxious to cut deep into the solid substance of life, instead of creating ripples which the calm of to-morrow will obliterate. Behind the laughter of the familiar blue-grey eyes is a stern purpose. Even if you say that he has not merely amused his generation with his wit, but has by his high artistic power added to the dramatic wealth of the world, he will reject your homage with scorn. Art includes a moral purpose, he insists, or it is as mean as pantomime. Art for art's sake he loathes, as he loathes childless marriage. If it be not written of him that he made a deep mark on the mind, the convictions, of his time, his life will have been, from his point of view, a failure. He does not utter paradoxes: he is a paradox—the most moral immoralist, the most unselfish preacher of egoism, the gravest humorist, the most ascetic denouncer of the ten commandments, that ever lived. He does not smile at the people who take him seriously: he smiles at the people who do not.

And he has to-day the right to smile. The plays which most effectively convey his philosophy are now performed in ten European countries besides England; and throughout the United States. No other English artist of our time has an international audience approaching that of Bernard Shaw in size, to say nothing of intellectual quality. He can use the journals and magazines of half the world as his mouth-

pieces whenever he chooses. It may be largely, though certainly it is not wholly, because he is a jester. There is a deliberately shaped message in every jest, and it will rankle. He does not want a Shavian school: his ambition is larger than that. He wants to say what he pleases to the vast world outside all schools, and, in his way, he has succeeded. How he succeeded; what the message is that he delivers, under the jingle of the bells, and how he came by it, and what it is worth; what he has done, and failed to do; and how you may distinguish a momentary paradox from a reasoned conviction, it is the business of this little work to relate. It is not a panegyric or a biography. It is a critical interpretation of the man and his message.

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BERNARD SHAW

CHAPTER I

THE MAKING OF A REBEL

IN one of his prefaces Shaw has turned upon the critics who, having themselves established that he is nothing if not original, proceed to show, with an air of learning, that they have found him borrowing an idea from some other writer. "Their conception," he says, "of clever persons parthenogenetically bringing forth complete original cosmogonies by dint of sheer 'brilliancy' is part of that ignorant credulity which is the despair of the honest philosopher and the opportunity of the religious impostor." Minds feed on their environment, just as bodies do. Lest, however, he should flatter the intelligence of critics, he denies the borrowing they impute to him and refers them to writers of whom they had never heard. This is not perversity, but a correct account of the growth of his ideas. When we follow up the clues he gives us, we find that he took the germs of his ideas from the general intellectual atmosphere of his youth, and that still earlier experiences had made him particularly apt to nourish these germs. A biographical chapter is, therefore, an indispensable part of the interpretation of those peculiarities of thought and mood which have attracted so much attention, and are, according to the temper of his audience, a scandal or a gospel, a comedy or an enigma.

Let it be granted at once that of the quintessential qualities of the man, the powers which put a personal stamp on the ideas he has adopted, there is no explanation. They are part of that original outfit which we sometimes flatter ourselves we have understood when we call it a man's hereditary endowment. In Shaw's case we admit the fallacy more easily because his chief gifts are just those which a careless tradition ascribes to his native land, and we are apt to dismiss them cheerfully as "racial endowment."

He was born in Dublin on July 26th, 1856; and one of the first illusions that a careful student must abandon is the notion that this implies a birthright of "Celtic wit and brilliance." American and continental writers may be pardoned for entertaining the idea that Ireland—stricken, half-famished, depopulated Ireland—bubbles with perennial wit and is the richest source in the British Empire of "brilliant" writers. Perhaps even the bulk of English people can hardly be expected to sacrifice so pleasant an ingredient of a summer holiday as the belief in Irish humour. The Englishman goes to Ireland for laughter, and is determined to find some excuse for it. Car-drivers and waiters do their best to live up to the advertisement of their country, and the tourist returns with a collection of heavy pleasantries which he would disdain if he heard them from a French or German mouth. The note of melancholy which is sounded by so many sincere Irish writers, from Thomas Moore to George Moore and the new Celtic school, is unintelligible to him. He persists in thinking that the hungry and desolate land sparkles with Attic wit, and that it is the most natural thing in the world for an Irish writer to be brilliant.

Although Shaw has humorously encouraged the

growth of legends about himself, he has more than once assailed this illusion. He is not a Celt ; in fact, there are no Celts ; and, if there are any, they are not witty and brilliant. "When people talk about the Celtic race," says Doyle in "*John Bull's Other Island*," "I feel as if I could burn down London." In the preface to the play Shaw observes that Ireland was "peopled just as England was, and its breed was crossed by just the same invaders." This is an exaggeration, because England was nearer to the source of contamination, but the pedigree which Shaw's biographer has gravely provided shows that, however many Celts there may be in Ireland, the Shaws do not belong to that category. In all the branches which meet in the person of George Bernard Shaw we have English or Scottish stocks which were transplanted to Ireland in the seventeenth century, and have since carefully preserved their gentility and Protestantism from the taint of marriage or brotherly intercourse with the Celt. They were Orange aliens in Catholic Ireland.

Nor does Shaw for a moment represent them as a dull-witted English colony living amidst a sprightly and witty people. In the play from which I have quoted he gives a picture of "the real Ireland": a dreary picture, in which Irish wit turns out to be a sluggish faculty that needs some violently humorous situation to strike out of it the feeblest pleasantries. Consistently with most other Irish writers, he insists that the climate and the political and economic conditions make the Irish mind dreamy and melancholy—clear-headed too, he says, with decided originality, but we may consider that paradox later. His own middle-class Protestant world he describes as joyless and depressing. One faint witticism of his father's

is all that he can recall for the encouragement of those biographers who think a man's wit is explained if his father or mother had a glimmer of it.

As to "Celtic brilliance," one can only wonder that serious literary men ever penned the phrase. "Swift and Sheridan . . . Oscar Wilde and G. B. Shaw," they exclaim. The blank between the names is expressive. It reminds us of the extraordinary barrenness of Irish letters during nearly a century of exceptional stimulation. The novelist Lever alone comes between Thomas Moore and George Moore. Of eighty nineteenth-century writers in Gosse's "Modern English Literature" three only are Irish: of more than two hundred in Professor Seccombe's list only a dozen are Irish, and scarcely half of these have a fair sense of humour. It is only in recent decades that Ireland has been well represented in our literature, and one would hardly say that Yeats and Synge, Dowden and Moore, Francis Thompson and Lionel Johnson, sustain the legend of wit and brilliance.

Shaw's endowment of wit and intellect is personal. Neither race nor pedigree throws any light on it. The secrets of human inheritance are still veiled from us. We can at the most discover features of his parents, his home, and his career which successively mould the native endowment and inspire the cluster of ideas and passions in the service of which his wit has been enlisted.

His father, George Carr Shaw, came of a line of Irish Protestant officials and small professional men, often intermarrying with the daughters of Irish Protestant clergymen: a line which begins in an Anglo-Scottish adventurer who went from Hampshire in the seventeenth century to join the colony of parasites

on conquered Ireland. His successors became a crowd of prolific "Irish gentlemen," living on small estates, official positions, or polite professions. George Carr Shaw had a sinecure in the Government service, which admirably suited his indolence and incompetence. In character he was the antithesis of George Bernard ; he contributed to the qualities of his son only by the impressiveness of his bad example and failure. It is enough that he was, the son says, "in theory a vehement teetotaller, but in practice often a furtive drinker" ; and that, when he was pensioned in 1850, and invested in a mill and corn business, he failed.

Two years after he had taken up this business he married Lucinda Elizabeth Gurley, who was nearly twenty years younger than he. She was the daughter of a Carlow gentleman, who married a second time. Spirited, independent, and very young, she fled somewhat hastily from the stepmother to the failing corn-merchant. In this ill-assorted home George Bernard Shaw began his first observations of married life. The father was amiable, weak, and conventional : the mother was capable, self-reliant, audacious. Her love of singing brought her into communication with an able teacher of music, George John Vandeleur Lee, a handsome man with fine Dundrearies. He conducted operas, and practised them with Mrs Shaw. When the income from the corn-business became thinner, Lee set up a joint household with the Shaws, and the house throbbed with music. In his early teens Shaw knew many operas by heart ; and he could distinguish between his mother's bold independence and his father's irresolution.

The larger world—the clan, one might say—furnished fresh material for a young philosophy of life.

Shaws and Gurleys from Carlow and Kilkenny and other places entered the domestic stage at times, and gave an impression of the middle-class type. In religion they were sternly and contemptuously superior to the superstitions of their Catholic neighbours ; the mother alone broke the tradition, as her love of music often took her to Catholic churches. In the exclusiveness of caste they were equally rigid ; George Bernard must not play with the children of tradespeople, and must appreciate that the Shaw clan was irradiated by the splendour of a remote baronet-cousin. In clothes, social ritual, and ideas there was the same general obedience to the tradition of gentility. It was a world of small snobs, redeemed more or less by the independent young mother and an heretical uncle. The young boy listened one day to a domestic discussion of the raising of Lazarus. The uncle disdainfully held that the miracle was "a put-up job" between Christ and his friend, and, after reflection, the young nephew agreed. These spurts of heresy were, however, infrequent, and only served to make plainer the common features of the typical Irish Protestant gentleman of small means. It was not at all a world of Puritans, as Mr Chesterton has suggested, or of ascetics. It was a world of small snobs, with one or two pointed examples of rebellion for the encouragement of the rebelliously-inclined boy.

The parents "went their own way and let me go mine," says Shaw. They assumed, as a matter of tradition, that he would take the impress of the caste, become a respectable notary or official, and provide half a dozen more little Shaws to maintain the prestige and ideals of the family. Instead of this he gradually nourished a loathing of the whole routine,

and escaped into a world created by his imagination. He fought great battles, made love to queens, and gloried in tremendous adventures, as he wandered about the dreary Dublin suburb. "Such insight as I have in criticism," he said long afterwards, "is due to the fact that I exhausted romanticism before I was ten years old." A more imaginative or more humane religion might have enlisted his fancy, but the dreary church-going of his father's class repelled him. God seemed to him to be the narrow-minded patron of the small gentry of Dublin, and heaven to be a further stretch of drab gentility. He deserted "the house of Satan," as he later called the bleak chapel, at the age of ten, and did not enter a church for twenty years afterwards. His mother was the finest figure in his world, and he imbibed her spirit and her love of music.

School-years arrived, with further rebellious material for his philosophy of life. He learned little, left his tasks to other boys when he could, and was content to live near the bottom of his class. "It was the most completely wasted and mischievous part of my life," he says. It was probably even more mischievous than he knew, when he wrote this, as a recollection of it in later years would encourage his anarchist ideas. You shudder, or smile, when he says: "The vilest abortionist is he who attempts to mould a child's character." He might invite you to reflect what had become of his school-fellows, whose characters were moulded, and what had become of him, whose character was allowed to grow in freedom. Here and there a fellow-pupil or a master appealed to him. With one youth, McNulty, who afterwards wrote novels, he kept up a voluminous correspondence for years. A scientifically-minded master, Chichester Bell,

interested him in science, and he read Tyndall's early works and (later) studied Armand Troussseau's "Lectures in Clinical Medicine": a ponderous thing in five volumes, which must have sunk like a large slab of lead in his artistic mind. But Bell also spoke to him of Wagner, and he bought "Lohengrin" and advanced in musical education.

Of education in the academic sense, therefore, he had little. His school-career closed at fifteen, leaving him with an ill-digested medley of elementary knowledge, a disdain of schools, and an impatience of discipline. But the very failure of his masters to enforce the usual training left his mental vitality free to advance in congenial directions. Art was the field which persistently attracted him: not literary art, but music and painting. He wrote a short story, but he had no literary ambition. For some years now Lee had shared their home, and the boy's mind was steeped in music. He also spent much time in the Irish National Gallery. Bohn was at that time issuing Vasari's "Lives of the Most Excellent Painters" in his popular library, and the boy bought the five volumes and taught himself high standards of judgment of colour and form, with the usual independence of the isolated scholar.

The father regarded his artistic interest as an innocent means of employing his leisure, and when George Bernard had reached the end of school-days he placed him in a "very genteel office," where he was to learn land-agency and earn seven shillings a week. It is curious that he became an excellent and industrious clerk, though his employer found it necessary to forbid him to spread heresy among the staff, and was at times puzzled to find the artistic nature turning the sober office into an amateur opera-

house. During the second year of his clerical work, however, Lee went to London and the Shaw household was broken up. George Carr Shaw was now in too poor a position to maintain a house, and there were days of trouble, which ended in Elizabeth Shaw going to London, where she still lives. A medical man, a Spiritist, showed me one day a remarkable and particularly pointless drawing which a lady had produced "under spirit control": one of the usual examples of elaborate nonsense which, it is said, only a higher than human intelligence could produce. The "automatic" artist was Mrs Elizabeth Lucinda Shaw; but she proved a most capable and successful teacher of singing, and her resolute example counted for much in the education of her son.

The father and son took lodgings in Dublin, and the next few years were intolerably dull. The depressing routine of the office and the cheerless home chafed and irritated Shaw just at the time when he was forming his first ideas—especially his first idea of himself. He learned to despise the conventional rules, the petty hypocrisies, the fierce unreasoned convictions, the insensibility to the deeper realities of life, the small amusements, the narrow creed, of the middle-class in which he found himself. "Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose," he must have said to himself, as his horizon widened. He faced the awful alternatives of either playing the rebel in this implacable caste or losing his soul by identifying himself with it. Fancy George Bernard Shaw as a land-agent in Sackville Street! He concentrated on music and learned the piano; though, with his growing impatience of external discipline or rule, he did not labour through the customary exercises.

Echoes of a challenging, free-spoken world across

the sea came to encourage him. In 1874 Tyndall startled Ireland, as well as England, by his famous defiance of theology at Belfast, and Shaw was already interested in Tyndall's work. In the next year Moody and Sankey came to Dublin, and the Shaws went with their class to support the missionaries. Shaw has said that he was so disgusted with the proceedings that he wrote a letter to *Public Opinion*, announcing the tremendous fact that, if this was religion, *he* was an atheist. He magnifies this first crime against respectability. The letter (reprinted in *Public Opinion*, November 8th, 1907) makes no attack on theology and contains no profession of atheism. It merely resents the innocent trickery by which crowds were secured, accuses the missionaries of appealing to the wrong class of sinners, and makes light of the effect of conversion. As it was not signed, moreover, it cannot have created so wide a disturbance among his friends as he says. However, it was a sign of his growing insurgence against the pettiness and dreariness of his life, and in the following year, 1876, he crossed to England.

The early experience had encouraged his self-reliance, cynicism, contempt of traditions, and passion for sincerity, without giving him even such constructive ideas as a youth might be capable of. He was now to learn and embrace positive standards, but in conditions which peculiarly encouraged originality, disdain, self-centration, and asceticism. He approached London with a high opinion of himself and a hope that the new metropolis was intelligent enough to endorse it. Instead of this, he was to spend ten years in obscure, laborious, and utterly slighted work: a gifted artist, fully conscious of his gifts, living in a mean lodging on sixpence a day—he once

told me—and having to beg the sixpence from his mother.

For nine years Shaw lived in a cheap room in grimy Osnaburgh Street (no. 36), forging his literary weapon with the most singular patience and the grimdest determination that may be found in the lives of artists. In the nine years he earned by his pen the sum of six pounds, of which five were given him for writing the advertisement of a patent-medicine. Yet the pen laboured on, day after day, and the stream of manuscript flowed out and in again with a steadiness that promised to be eternal. The black frock coat turned green, the fray of the cuffs had to be clipped with scissors periodically, the silk hat became so shabby and limp that the back had to serve as the front, the trousers were cheap and baggy. Still he bent over his table in the mean street and poured copy on reluctant editors. One or two small periodicals admitted him, and he boasts that he ruined them. There was something wrong either with him or the public, and he had little doubt where the wrong lay. In later years an optician told him that he had "normal vision," which very few people have. "Better see rightly on a pound a week than squint on a million," he says.

In 1879 a friend induced him to turn from art for a few weeks. The Edison Telephone Company were trying to establish a new invention, and Shaw sometimes took the place of the regular lecturer on its merits. The American artisans he met in the basement in Queen Victoria Street reappear in the Conolly and Straker of his later work, but his engagement was short. He returned to letters and Osnaburgh Street. His father needed his help, and a self-supporting mother could hardly be expected to nourish a strapping son of twenty-three, but Shaw returned to

a way of life in which *he* would need *their* aid and "without a blush embraced the monstrosity." The good young man of normal tradition would have carried parcels or blacked boots. "I did not throw myself into the struggle for life," Shaw says; "I threw my mother into it. I was not a staff to my father's old age: I hung on to his coat tails." The biographer can do no more than murmur in trite language: All's well that ends well. He began to write novels, and soon learned that even fiction-readers were discriminating. His first story was, "with merciless fitness," entitled "Immaturity." It still exists, in its worn brown-paper covering, partly devoured by mice, "but even they have been unable to finish it." Somewhere its author says that it is "hardly a work I should be well advised in letting loose whilst my livelihood depends on my credit as a literary workman." Even the success in the United States of its four successors has not tempted him to part with it.

The four succeeding novels which he wrote in 1880 to 1883 will be examined presently. Meantime, while he was perfecting his craft by a severe restriction to writing only five pages a day and living on the maternal sixpences, he came into contact with thoughtful Londoners and gathered the material of his philosophy of life. He preserved his passport of gentility—his dress-suit—and while his appearance during the day sank from level to level of disreputability, he could cut a handsome figure at night. During the day he spent solitary hours in the National Gallery or the British Museum. Why trouble about money when he was part owner of such treasures of literature and art? In the evening he had pleasant invitations, for amateur singers liked his accompaniment; so

he says, and it is doubtless true, but one imagines that he could also talk. Something of his experience is, no doubt, reproduced in the opening of his second novel, "The Irrational Knot," where a workman with musical talent is asked to join middle-class folk in giving a philanthropic concert. His biographer, Dr Henderson, says that Shaw has put into the philanderer Charteris a little of the mental attitude induced in himself by early experience of women. It suggests that the tall, sandy-haired Shaw of his twenties, with fine ironic blue eyes and a caustic tongue, had personal reason to frame his philosophy of woman as the pursuer of man. He was, however, ascetic by temperament, and his circumstances were starving the little healthy sensuality he had brought from Ireland. He was being forced into that peculiar combination of morality in practice and immorality in principle which distinguishes him.

This intercourse with middle-class London did more than furnish the material of the fierce generalisations and dramatic characters of his later work. It introduced him into the living intellectualism of that stirring age. It was the height of the period of J. S. Mill, Herbert Spencer, Huxley, Clifford, George Eliot : a time when new ideas about religion, economics, morals, politics, and everything that the early Victorian age had definitely settled, were spreading like a fever through adolescent London. Little circles gathered in sitting-rooms and small halls, and defiant debates were held. The Agnosticism of Huxley and Spencer and Darwin was applauded, and the ethical culture which the new spiritual directors of England would substitute for the Christian ethic was boldly derided, to their extreme concern. There was more republicanism and more anti-moralism in London in the early

eighties than there is to-day. Prominent and popular writers or speakers lived, comfortably or ascetically, with women to whom they were not married.

One of the most rebellious of these centres of sedition was the Zetetical Society, which met in Long Acre. I had occasion, in writing the life of Holyoake, to run over some of its announcements and realise its terrible ambitions. All the panaceas of the eighties, which had succeeded the panaceas of the forties, were discussed in it : agnosticism, radicalism, the emancipation of woman, evolution, the destruction of morality, and so on. The men and women who met there were generally followers of J. S. Mill : the saint of rationalism, the idol of women, the hope of the radicals, and the discreet encourager of rebellion against sex-morality. In 1879 a friend took Shaw to a meeting of this society, and he found it congenial. There was a Captain Wilson who denounced morals as a device of Christianity for the enslavement of people, and a learned Scot named Stuart Glennie who held that the Christian ethic was a narcotic which the white races administered to the coloured. The members were generally opponents of Christianity, which was riddled with Darwinian arrows and lacerated with Nietzschean scorn (though Nietzsche was then unknown) in the debates. Social and economic questions also were discussed, but on the sober lines of Mill's political economy.

This atmosphere thoroughly agreed with Shaw, and he joined the society at once and assisted in the battering of Christian doctrines and morals. His associates were well-read men and women, and he was stimulated to read. Sidney Webb was a member of the group, and it was at this period that Shaw entered into a life-long association with the economist. Shaw

began to articulate his own "atheism" and other heresies, but found that public speaking was not with him a natural art. With characteristic resolution he learned to speak easily and forcibly, and struggled with his nervousness at meeting after meeting until it disappeared.

The peep into subterranean London encouraged him, and he began to attend all sorts of meetings. He still cultivated music and enjoyed paintings, and he plodded grimly by day through his scheme of novels. At night he wandered in search of open doors, wherever some heresy was preached, and one evening, toward the close of 1882, when he was writing "Cashel Byron's Profession," he was drawn to the Memorial Hall in Farringdon Street. Henry George was visiting Europe, and he had been excellently advertised by the authorities; they had arrested him in Ireland a few months before. That evening was critical in Shaw's career. No doubt, he was bound to turn sooner or later from the intellectual issues of the Zetetical Society to the vast problem of poverty, but it was Henry George who gave him the first fiery interest in it. The eloquence and clear dogmatism of the enthusiast carried him away. He bought George's book and became convinced that the remedy of the gravest evil in the world was exquisitely simple—Henry George's single tax—and London must be made to see it. All that festering mass of squalor which then (and partly now) surrounded the debating room in Long Acre could be abolished by an Act of Parliament.

He joined the Land Reform Union, and met new friends: educated middle-class men, like himself, with a high-principled hostility to the unequal distribution of wealth and the trappings which wealthy

people wore. An Eton master, J. L. Joynes, had been arrested with Henry George, and had been forced to leave Eton. Another master, Henry Salt, the well-known humanitarian and writer on Shelley, voluntarily retired and practised the simple life in a Surrey cottage. Edward Carpenter was of the group of sandal-wearers and water-drinkers. H. H. Champion, now a genial guide of literary taste at the Antipodes, had thrown up a commission in the army to enlist in the war against poverty. Sidney Olivier (now Sir Sidney, recently Governor of Jamaica—then a civil servant), Stewart Headlam (a prominent representative of the new High-Broad-Church Socialist clergy), and others, were more or less connected. Shaw, who had a slender knowledge of economics and a large acquaintance with poverty, turned from Darwinism and his other intellectual issues to the new panacea, and became an ardent propagandist.

In tracing the growth of his ideas one must attach great importance to these new associations. The single tax would be represented, in his own peculiar language, as a mere trick of the Life-Force to lead him to higher things. The asceticism and humanitarianism of the new group would make a deeper impression. The simple abstemious habits which his poverty imposed on him seem to have been made easy by a personal disposition to asceticism, but they now became a philosophy. Plain living and high thinking was, literally, the ideal of the group. They introduced Shaw to Thoreau, Walt Whitman, and Shelley ; he attended a meeting of the Shelley Society, and the infant society was almost shattered when a dour, badly-dressed figure, with straggling sandy beard and other features of the typical “wild Irishman,” got up and said that he was, “like Shelley,”

an atheist, a Socialist, and a vegetarian. It was at this period he adopted vegetarianism, the ravages of which his robust constitution has admirably resisted for thirty years.

Some of the most singular features of his creed were fixed at this time. The Neo-Pagan of the nineteenth century generally became, like the ancient Pagan, either a Stoic or an Epicurean. As the most prominent character of the Stoic is a profound and almost unreasoning reverence for natural moral law, Shaw certainly cannot be described as a Stoic. On the other hand, it was easy to persuade himself, in his circumstances and with his simple tastes, that to set up happiness or pleasure as the supreme aim was hoggish, and this was supposed to be the essence of Epicureanism. In point of fact, these simple-life colonies are the nearest approach in modern times to the intellectual conversations, over simple cakes and water, which Epicurus loved to arrange in his garden on the outskirts of Athens. The Roman luxury and banquets which St Augustine taught Europe to regard as "Epicurean" are the widest possible departure from the ideal of the great Greek. However, though there was more boisterous fun among the simple-lifers than there had ever been in the Epicurean garden, they persuaded themselves that happiness was a by-product of a healthy life; such men as Shaw and Carpenter united what most people would call the utmost license in opinions to the utmost severity in practice, and a free-spoken scorn of moral law to an ardent passion for justice and other moral qualities. At a later date Shaw would find a philosophy which would, in his opinion, bring consistency into these attitudes. First he had to break entirely with the rationalism of the Zetetical Society.

From the later work of Henry Salt and Edward Carpenter we may conclude that the new message of science was already regarded with some suspicion as encouraging cruelty. It talked of a bloody struggle for life as a fundamental law of planetary existence, defended vivisection and vaccination, and so on. But it was the further development of his Socialist feeling which completed Shaw's aversion from science and put him in the peculiar and isolated position which he still occupies: the position of one who is opposed with equal vehemence to Christianity and to Rationalism.

Socialism was at that time entering upon a new phase in England. The earlier system of Robert Owen, which had been called Socialism, had fallen into disfavour, and Owen had died in complete obscurity. The work of reform had been divided among a number of special movements (Co-operation, Trade Unionism, Arbitration, Education, etc.), and revolutionary feeling was in abeyance, especially after what were called the horrors of French Communism in 1871. Now the eloquence of Ferdinand Lassalle and the learning of Karl Marx were imposing a new Socialism on Europe, and a number of impatient middle-class Londoners were translating it into English. A new panacea was discovered, and (as in every previous case) this time it was the real panacea. Marx's theory of surplus value had given the first scientific diagnosis of social disease, it was said, and his cry of a "class war" was loudly repeated over Europe—very largely by men who (like Marx and Lassalle) themselves belonged to the middle class.

In England these elements were chiefly gathered in the Social Democratic Federation, in which middle-class men like H. M. Hyndman and Belfort Bax and

H. H. Champion and W. Morris joined with John Burns and other rebellious working men. They smiled at the enthusiasm of the followers of Henry George, and the train of zeal or indignation which his lectures left in England swept large numbers into their Federation, where a more drastic remedy was urged in more lurid language. The conversion of Shaw is typical of what was happening. He went to a meeting of the Social Democrats, and, at question time, rose to ask why they were wasting time instead of pressing the plain remedy prescribed by George. He was greeted with a laugh and told to read Karl Marx. Thorough in everything, he had bought and studied George's book, "Progress and Poverty," at the close of the lecture in the Memorial Hall; he now went to the Museum and studied Karl Marx. "Das Kapital" is one of the most impressive books that can be put into the hands of a thoughtful young man with plenty of rebellious feeling and not too much knowledge of economics. Its apparently rigorous logic seems to provide a most solid foundation for the class-war which it recommends. Shaw read and was convinced. "From that hour," he says, "I became a man with some business in the world." Huxley's Gadarene swine, and Bradlaugh's atheism, and Mill's emancipation of woman, and all the issues he had debated in the Zetetical Society, seemed pale and bloodless. The charm of the Socialist ideal is in the simplicity of the formula and the complexity and comprehensiveness of the supposed result. It was fascinating to think that one bold revolution would transform the face of the world for ever.

In later years Shaw said that what chiefly won and inflamed him in Marx's book was the attack on the middle class. He came in a few years to regard both

the theory of surplus value and the cry for a class-war as fallacious, but the general attack on the middle class fell in with and encouraged his own mood. He did not in the least share the illusion of virtuous Lazarus and wicked Dives. He had already (in 1880) written "The Irrational Knot," in which the artisan Conolly says to the middle-class man :—

"Although a workman, I don't look on every gentleman as a bloodsucker who seizes on the fruits of my labour only to pursue a career of vice. I will even admit that there are gentlemen who deserve to be respected more than the workmen who have neglected all their opportunities—slender as they are—of cultivating themselves a little. You, on the other hand, know that an honest man is the noblest work of God; that nature's gentlemen are the only real gentlemen; that kind hearts are more than coronets and simple faith than Norman blood, and so forth. But when your approval of these benevolent clap-traps is brought to such a practical test as the marriage of your sister to a workman, you see clearly enough that they do not establish the suitability of personal intercourse between members of different classes."

Workmen, of course, do not talk like that, but Shaw did, long before he heard of Socialism. He had closely observed, and lightly disdained, the American workers in the employment of the Edison Telephone Company; and he had seen and disdained the ways of the middle class from his earliest years. In London he had found the same prejudices and stupidities as in Dublin: social pretence, religious bigotry, moral insincerity, political inanity. He was in the mood of Samuel Butler, his chief inspirer, whose "*Erewhon*" had been published ten years before. Karl Marx crowned the iniquity of the wealthy and

the middle class for him by apparently showing that they maintained all this wasteful folly by the economic trick of filching the surplus value of the products of labour.

I deal fully in later chapters with the development of his Socialism and his philosophy and art, and would merely trace here, in general terms, the relation of his growth to his circumstances. It is a point on which he has never been consistent. He insists in 1903 ("Man and Superman") that "the bubble of heredity has been pricked," meaning that the theory of Weismann has triumphed, and environment has nothing like the importance which the earlier theory assigned to it; and in 1904 ("John Bull's Other Island") he insists that the Irish character is wholly a matter of environment. His inconsistencies, and the foolish claim of some of his admirers that we cannot expect a witty man to be consistent, may be considered later. The fact is that his own philosophy steadily grows with the changes of his external circumstances.

The new Socialism brought new friends—Graham Wallas, William Archer, Hubert Bland, William Morris, etc.—and new activity, as will be told presently. He flung himself ardently into the propaganda of Socialism, and was as fierce and optimistic as the rawest recruit to any extreme body. Indirectly, as well as by persuading him that his earlier interests were trivial in comparison with this sacred campaign, this new and absorbing fervour pressed him further in the direction of his peculiar philosophy of life. His earlier friends, and Freethinkers like Bradlaugh and Foote, were opposed to Socialism on Darwinian as well as economic grounds. The free struggle of individuals and survival of the fittest was said to be

the supreme law of the development of living things. So much the worse for Darwinism, Shaw concluded. This cruel and wasteful struggle could *not* be an essential law of life. He looked to rival theorists, who were not Christians, and found a learned and congenial guide in Samuel Butler, whose wit, sarcasm, and disdain of conventional rules and practices very strongly recommended him. Butler was just then conducting the last campaign of any ability against Darwinism, and Shaw certainly read and reviewed his "Luck or Cunning" in 1887. He took the side of Butler, contemptuously called the Darwinians "materialists," and adopted the position of a bitterly anti-rationalist atheist, with as profound a disdain of science as an uneducated Wesleyan minister. I will state the grounds of his position more fully at a later stage, and wish here only to indicate the historical development. If any man ever did "parthenogenetically bring forth a complete original cosmogony," it was not Mr Shaw.

In 1885 he made the acquaintance of William Archer, who persuaded him to turn from his futile novel-writing to journalism. In the next phase of his life he was to be devoted to art-criticism, leading by accident to dramatic production, and the propagation of Socialism. Meantime, some of the five novels he had written between 1879 and 1883 were published, and one examines them with interest for traces—such traces as may be discoverable in a work of fiction—of a reflection of his mental development. Champion and other Socialists bought the periodical called *To-day* and used it for propagating advanced ideas. Shaw says that the editors of the many little periodicals which struggled against bankruptcy at that idealist period were in the habit of printing their friends'

efforts at fiction and poetry, in order to ease the treasury, and so he came to find a publisher at last, though not payment. He gave Champion the last and, presumably, best of his five manuscripts, and "The Unsocial Socialist" went out to bewilder their small public, in 1884. "Cashel Byron's Profession" followed in 1885, and Mrs Besant published "The Irrational Knot" and "Love among the Artists" in *Our Corner*. It will, however, be better to notice the works in the order of their origin.

In introducing the novels to a wider public, years afterwards, Shaw complained that he had "lost the impudence of the apprentice without gaining the skill of the master." He calls them "very green things, very carefully written." Most critics agree with him, though some believe that he would have become famous as a novelist. It is not improbable that, although dramatic talent is clearer from the start than a gift for writing novels, he would have won a large circle of admirers as a novelist when his conception of work was fully developed. Fifteen years ago he recommended to me as the first rule of writing: "Take the utmost care that what you have to say is correct, and then dash it down as frivolously as you can." His earlier novels were certainly not written on this recipe. What he had to say was largely incorrect, and the way in which he said it was too laboured. If you confine yourself to writing five folios a day, you can hardly be frivolous. Great artists like Zola and Phillpotts have imposed this severe restraint on themselves, but Shaw was too inexperienced to conceal the labour.

He improves from year to year in this respect, though even the fifth novel is, as such, very defective. But a graver defect is the reflection of his lonely,

brooding life and narrow experience. His power and use of observation are obviously great, but his range is limited. In the third novel, as he remarks, he assigns his wealthy heroine a park of thirty acres, imagining that this means an estate about the size of the Isle of Wight. In describing such a world he was "like a peasant in a drawing-room." He knows little more about the workers (who are hardly noticed), and his picture of the middle class is enlarged by a liberal use of a brooding and malicious imagination. He admits that he knew little of English life, though the works were "not wholly a compound of intuition and ignorance." His characters, especially women, are often bloodless, theoretical constructions; often (as in his later work) very exceptional persons pressed on us as types. Yet the works contain an ample promise of the wit, shrewd observation, caustic reflection, and humorous exaggeration, and some of the paradox and epigram, that distinguish his later work.

His first novel, "Immaturity," has never seen the light, as I said. The second, written in 1880, was called "The Irrational Knot," a study of marriage in the very common form of depicting an unhappy and incongruous marriage. A smart American artisan, a superior Straker, attracts the affection of a young lady of the upper middle class—by some means which the novel does not make clear—and, when an invention enriches him, marries her. Conolly is a mixture of Bernard Shaw and the American worker he had studied in Queen Victoria Street: a super-workman. At times he talks pure Shavianese and acts with heroic disregard of the sentimental conventions. When his wife tires of his frigid bluntness, and elopes with an amorous noodle, he behaves as if his errand-boy had stolen twopence. He is depicted as an

amateur musician who mixes with, and studies, the middle class at musical evenings. Hence the story is far from impersonal, and it shows the beginning of Shavianism. The women pursue the men rather than the men the women : the frailties of the middle-class paterfamilias are scathingly accentuated : parents and children are on the worst possible terms: and the scorn of unreality and convention includes a disdain of the current standard of sex-relations. His favourite woman-character, Nelly M'Quinch, an admirable intellectual automaton, observes that the actress who will not marry the man she lives with is a woman of good sense and that the married ladies are really prostitutes.

Shaw has himself mentioned the name of Ibsen in connection with this story. He knew nothing of Ibsen at the time, and sees in the work (in terms of his later philosophy) "a revolt of the Life-Force against ready-made morality." He regards the book as "a fiction of the first order" on account of its original morality. "No man who shuts his eyes and opens his mouth when religion and morality are offered to him on a long spoon can share the same Parnassian bench with those who make an original contribution to religion and morality, were it only a criticism." We will consider that standard of art later. But the comparison, in any sense, with "A Doll's House" is not happy. The heroine Marian is never in anything like the condition of Nora, and, instead of a psychic revolution, we have a familiar type of weak elopement. Hence we cannot follow Shaw when he says: "I seriously suggest that 'The Irrational Knot' may be regarded as an early attempt on the part of the Life-Force to write a 'Doll's House' in English by the instrumentality of a very immature

writer aged twenty-four." It is Ibsenist only in the general scorn of unreality, romance, and conventional standards. The structure is loose, the conversation often stilted and unreal, the humour slender; but at times it approaches the later Shavian level of smart conversation, and the latter part of it is powerful, and often dramatic.

The other novels need not be so fully considered. While, in the course of 1881, the carrier was hawking his brown-paper parcel between his house and the publishers, he was writing "*Love among the Artists*," which he calls "a novel with a purpose." He thinks he "had a notion of illustrating the difference between that enthusiasm for the fine arts which people gather from reading about them and the genuine artistic faculty which cannot help creating, interpreting, or at least unaffectedly enjoying music and pictures." This, however, is clearly a secondary motive. It is an ironic depiction of life, as he saw it. Conolly returns—as if the preceding novel had gone through ten editions, and the British public demanded more of his hero—but the chief character, Owen Jack, is a man with the same characters preposterously exaggerated, so that the author may describe life in even more caustic terms. He is a delightful and impossible ruffian; and the heroine is equally delightful and impossible in her placid intellectuality—an early Vivie Warren. The letter in which she accepts an offer of marriage might relate to the purchase of a sewing-machine. There is the same discord in family-life and the same scorn of the middle class and its conventions. The Shavian John Bull is fully born: before Shaw really knows John Bull.

In "*Cashel Byron's Profession*" the novelist seems to feel that this assault on society will not do, and he

wanders into a world of pure fantasy. A new motive is a ridicule of British ideas of sport and hero-worship, but the general aim is to amuse by a burlesque association of prize-fighters, wealthy ladies, Zulus, and other incongruities. The imaginative feat is stupendous. The novel, however, came back with the usual regularity from the publishers, and the author drudged on with almost inhuman indifference. When this story did appear, in 1886, R. L. Stevenson spoke of it as "mad and deliriously delightful," and seems to have regarded its author as a literary portent. The women-characters amazed him.

In 1883, while publishers' readers were puzzling over Cashel Byron—assuredly one of the most desperate enigmas ever hurled at them—Shaw began his last novel, "The Unsocial Socialist." It is fantastic unreal, ironical, and witty. It opens with an attempt to master the psychology of the school-girl, and makes a gentleman disguise himself as a labourer to escape a wife from whom he is slightly estranged and an ill-gotten fortune. There is too much manufacture in his characters: too much Shavian machinery, and too little blood. Shaw admitted long afterwards that he had misdescribed the English middle class, to which almost all his characters belong; they were worse than he suspected. In reality, he was beginning the work of his life: exaggeration on principle.

"The Unsocial Socialist" seems to me inferior to the earlier stories, but it was the first to see the light. Champion wanted cheap copy for *To-day*, and the title, the Socialistic seasoning, and the attack on the middle class, commended the book to him. It first drew attention to Shaw's ability. William Morris read it in its monthly instalments and liked it. Archer "reviewed it prominently," and Stevenson

and Henley praised it. The *Saturday Review* declared it to be "the novel of the age." By that time, however, Shaw had retired in despair from the field of fiction and begun journalism. His other novels were successively published, and friends, or the friends of friends, applauded, but there does not seem to have been any grave danger that, as Shaw said later, "some adventurous publisher might have ruined him" by drawing him on to a successful career in fiction. Even in the height of Shaw's fame the novels did not circulate much in England. In the United States they have been widely read, in pirated editions, and many years afterwards Shaw was amused to find that the volume at the head of a periodical list of book-sales in America was "The *Unsocial Socialist*."

The chief interest of the novels is that they show how far Shaw's characteristic ideas had developed by 1880. The education in rebellion, which I have described, had done its work. He was already a rebel against his class, his creed, his whole inherited equipment of rules and standards. There is explosive defiance in his earliest characters, those characters in whom he obviously puts part of himself. They talk like members of the Zetetical Society, which he was then frequenting. In the middle of the period Henry George and Karl Marx invade him, and still further embitter him against the middle class and its complacent novelists, dramatists, and poets. Life seemed to him an inexpressibly wrong thing, a problem of fiery urgency, yet they talk and behave as if the opening of a public park was a restoration of the garden of Eden. He becomes an Anarchist, as we shall see. Associates like Belfort Bax and Stuart Glennie, and writers like Butler, give him a philosophic creed of rebellion, and his scorn of conventions

is formulated as a superior conviction. With his disdain of science and rationalism he breaks the last sympathetic link with the optimism of the time, and becomes the arch-rebel of London. But he must first sharpen his pen by years of critical work, come into closer touch with reality by Socialistic activity, and make firmer the philosophic foundations of his denials and beliefs. These things must be examined in order before we approach his second period of literary production.

CHAPTER II

SOCIALISM

His struggle for a complete alteration of the economic order will probably be described by Shaw, when he sums up his life's work, as his greatest service to his generation. He has, as we shall see, wavered in his appreciation of this work, and he has quarrelled with his earlier Socialist colleagues. But he to-day insists that this is the fundamental aim of his life, and he demands a change of so drastic a character that moderate Socialists smile at his enthusiasm. The work is certainly the central fact of his career, and it is necessary to examine his opinions on this side before any others.

I have described his introduction to Socialism : his association with the followers of Henry George and the disturbance of his first phase by the reading of Karl Marx. This was at the end of 1882. During the following year the tall, pale figure, with piercing, blue-grey eyes and straggling sandy beard, dressed in a loose brown suit and woollen shirt, was very familiar in the parks and at other meetings. He mixed with the Social Democrats, and helped them to blast the existing order of society. While he debated the question of joining them, and becoming a colleague of Hyndman, Burns, and Belfort Bax, the Fabian Society was founded. A group of educated men used to meet at Chelsea in the rooms of Professor Thomas Davidson. *Their* specific for the regeneration of

society was ethical self-cultivation, stimulated by occasional meetings at which they read papers to each other on virtue and culture, with "natural religion" as a common base. F. Podmore, E. R. Pease, H. H. Champion, H. Bland, and other acquaintances of Shaw belonged to this select body, and it was not long before they demanded more drastic action on the world than merely punishing it by their virtuous example. Socialistic feeling was spreading in London. Podmore, and Pease, in particular, pressed for less academic work, and in 1884 they formed a new society within the narrow bounds of "The Fellowship of the New Life." Frank Podmore, always shrewd and penetrating, suggested the name of "The Fabian Society," because it ought to follow the waiting policy of old Fabius Cunctator. Into this promising society the more vigorous reformers went, and the "Fellowship" died. You find fragments of it to-day in ethical societies at Croydon and New York and elsewhere.

During the summer of 1884 the little Fabian group met occasionally at Pease's rooms in Osnaburgh Street, near Shaw's lodging, and he looked in. They had just published the first Fabian Tract ("Why are the many poor?"), with a vigorous denunciation of "the swindle of competition." Shaw found its members more congenial company than the fiery working men of the Social Democratic Federation, and in September he joined. There was no difference in policy, and little in strength of language at that time, between the two bodies, but the Fabians were middle-class: emancipated middle-class. As Shaw wrote the second and third Tracts for the Society, we have an excellent indication of his frame of mind. Tract 2 was a two-page "Manifesto," containing Shaw's new creed

in a series of Shavian propositions. Three may be quoted :

“ That a life-interest in the Land and Capital of the nation is the birthright of every individual. . . .

“ That the State should compete with private individuals—especially with parents—in providing happy homes for children, so that every child may have a refuge from the tyranny or neglect of its natural custodians.

“ That the established Government has no more right to call itself the State than the smoke of London has to call itself the weather.”

We recognise Shaw more clearly than in the novels ; the Anarchism of the third proposition is all that he has outgrown. The Fabians had a formidable recruit in the impatient Irishman. His second leaflet (Tract 3) is an ironical “ Warning to provident landlords and capitalists.” Socialism is spreading, and they will do well to disarm it by passing reform-measures. But the Fabians had not yet made clear plans of reform in their own mind, as Tract 4 shows. It is a compound paper ; one half by the German Collectivist Bebel, and one by an Anarchist. It says that “ English Socialism is not yet Anarchist or Collectivist ; not yet definite enough in point of policy to be classified ” ; an amazing situation, seeing the vast difference between the two schemes.

Shaw himself was at that time, and for some years, an Anarchist, or, as it was then said, an Anarchist-Socialist. The two schools agreed in a virulent denunciation of capitalism and existing government, so remained together as long as they could agree. But the Anarchist denies the need of any central government, and is politically nearer to Herbert Spencer than to the Socialist. Remember Anatole

France's genial and ironic description of the future in "Sur la pierre blanche." He describes the realisation of the Socialist ideal, which he shares. Most Socialist writers represent this realisation as the noon-day of peace and tranquil happiness, but Anatole France adds to the picture a group of angry Anarchists throwing bombs at the Socialist institutions. Shaw's general attitude, and his weakness in political economic science, disposed him to Anarchism. He was a friend of Mrs Wilson, an impetuous lady-member who spread "a sort of influenza of Anarchism" in the Fabian Society. He addressed Anarchist meetings off Tottenham Court Road: not of philosophical Anarchists, but men of business, as one of them had a bomb in his pocket throughout one of Shaw's lectures, and blew himself up, involuntarily, in Greenwich Park next day.¹ As a rule they were innocent enough except in speaking of marriage. Henry Seymour, at whose house I met groups of them, reprinted in 1889 a paper by Shaw, which he had published in *The Anarchist* (at what date I cannot ascertain). It was called "Anarchism *versus* State-Socialism." It makes a violent assault on Collectivism, and pleads for the abolition of all authority.

In his antagonism to moral and educational authority Shaw remains an Anarchist, and, as we shall see, his economic ideal differs from that of most Socialists, while he detests and disdains Democracy. But the deeper study of economics on which he entered, and the association with men like Sidney Webb, caused him to abandon his crude early position. (In 1883 and 1884 Socialism was a fermenting mass of rebellion, with little more definite conviction than the fiery

¹ In another place Shaw says that the lecturer was Herbert Burrows.

belief that the rich robbed the workers and the Government existed to enable them to do so. By peaceful means if possible, by violent means if necessary, they were going to "break up society," empty the House of Commons and Buckingham Palace, and declare the new era inaugurated. They were not sure if money would be needed at all in the new industrial order. They believed that the change was imminent and easy. Some of them fixed the revolution for 1889, the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille; Shaw himself told a questioner that it would take only about a fortnight to get Socialism into working order. It was the heroic age.

Gradually, abler and cooler men were drawn into the Fabian Society. Shaw introduced Webb, and (Sir) Sidney Olivier and Graham Wallas followed. Webb's influence is seen in the issue of the fourth Tract. Strong language gives place to an imposing mass of statistics and other facts. Pease, Podmore, and Bland were already members. They slowly passed out of the effervescent stage, or rid the Society of its effervescent members, and "contracted that habit of freely laughing at ourselves which has always distinguished us, and which has saved us from becoming hampered by the gushing enthusiasts who mistake their own emotions for public movements." They learned also to chaff their opponents, instead of telling them what they really thought of them, and began to cough down any member of the circle who indulged in rhetoric. The purification of the Society was tempestuous. After one meeting Anderton's Hotel, not the most sedate establishment in London, was closed against them. But the Anarchists at length departed, in a whirlwind of heated rhetoric, and Shaw ended this phase of his social philosophy

by writing, in 1891, a Tract on "The Impossibilities of Anarchism." He declares that neither Individualism nor Collectivism must be applied with absolute rigour, but he severely criticises the Anarchist position as to economic order and central government.

His temporary attraction to the Anarchist ideal is not unintelligible. Owing to the predominance of strong sentiment over economic knowledge at the time among the Socialists, the attitude was not uncommon. Contact with the more cultivated and disciplined members of the Fabian Society, and the serious study of economics which they initiated, led to the discovery that the great gospel of the Evangelist Marx was unsound and to a sharp severance from his English followers.

The disillusion began in 1884, when Shaw and his associates were startled by the publication in *To-day* of a severe criticism of Marx's theory of surplus value by Philip Wicksteed, the eminent Unitarian. Professor Jevons had recently carried economic science in England beyond its ancient limits, and Wicksteed employed his theories to show that Marx's characteristic doctrine was unsound. The Socialists were disturbed, and, when no other would venture to reply to Wicksteed, Shaw drew his pen in defence of their evangelist. His reply was unsound and unsatisfactory, and, with his usual determination to go to the root of things, he approached the study of Jevons. When he found the pages of Jevons bristling with algebraic symbols, like a wall protected from invading boys by bits of broken glass, he even attempted to recover and piece together the fragments of algebra which remained from his school-days. He, and Webb, Olivier, and Wallas now entered upon a sober study of economic and social questions, and schooled

themselves into that disciplined and restrained temper which became characteristic of their Society.

They first formed the Hampstead Historic Club, which met once a fortnight for discussion and mutual instruction. For several years Shaw attended its meetings. At that time unconventionalism in dress and habit was a common feature of the Fabians—except of Hubert Bland, who was incurably respectable—and Shaw's poverty put him at no disadvantage. Every alternate week the little group assembled, each being professor in turn, and at least some glimpse was obtained of the mass of economic and historical science which ought to be made the real basis of their work. It is really in this period that Shaw lost the last trace of romanticism. He also attended meetings of the Shakespeare Society, the Browning Society, the Shelley Society, and other bodies, and, from 1883 onward, addressed many Socialist meetings. In 1884, moreover, he joined a more learned circle for the study of economics, which included experts like Alfred Marshall, Edgeworth, and Foxwell. This group, which afterwards developed into the Royal Economic Society, discussed the science in the anaemic academic way, entirely ignoring moral or sentimental aspects of the industrial order, and must have had a deep influence on Shaw. He attended its informal meetings for several years.

This severe discipline in the later 'eighties gradually drew Shaw away from Anarchists, "impossibilists," and "futile enthusiasts." He began to regard Socialism as a business-proposition, not to be obscured by sentimental and utopian considerations. It is not entirely a peculiarity of temperament which has given so distinctive a form to his social creed; indeed we shall find his warmer temperament sometimes

breaking through the restrictions imposed by his intellectual discipline. In any case, it is very important to have these historical facts in mind in appreciating his views.

The "futile enthusiasts," on their side, soon gave the Fabians occasion to stand aloof from them. In 1885 the Social Democrats took money from the Conservatives to enable them to run parliamentary candidates against the Liberals, and the little Fabian Society, then consisting of forty members, censured them. There was still no sharp severance, however, and in the grave troubles of 1886 and 1887 the Fabians feebly echoed the lurid language of the Socialist and Labour orators. It was a time of bad trade and deep distress. (The large army of the unemployed tramped about London with menacing banners, broke windows, and poured out volcanic rhetoric in Trafalgar Square, until the famous police-charge on "Bloody Sunday" (November 13th, 1887) and the return of prosperity swept away all fears and hopes of a revolution.) Champion departed for Australia, Burns slowly cultivated prudence, and the Fabians took up a hostile attitude toward Hyndman and the remaining Social Democrats and Anarchists.

It is not quite accurate to say that Shaw finally abandoned co-operation with the Social Democrats in 1887, as we find (Alderman) W. Sanders asking him in 1889 to be parliamentary candidate of the Federation at Battersea; and Shaw pleads that lack of means only forbids him to accept the invitation. But in 1887 he had written in the *National Reformer* (Bradlaugh's weekly journal) a series of critical articles on Karl Marx, in which he used all his new Jevonian economics to destroy the illusion of surplus value, and he emphatically rejected the idea of a

class war. He had found that, in discussion, "the Marxian theory was always snapping in his hand," while the theory of Jevons stood every test. As "surplus value" and "the class war" are the sacred shibboleths of the Social Democrats, these articles aroused their hostility, and H. M. Hyndman became a life-long antagonist of Shaw. The theory of surplus value Shaw regarded as an academic fallacy, and it is not necessary to consider his criticism of it; but the "class war" he considered a most mischievous blunder. In point of historical fact, it is middle-class men who have won the greater part of the reforms for the manual workers during the nineteenth century, and, from the industrial point of view, it is unsound and very harmful to attempt to draw a line between manual and professional workers. The real line of demarcation runs, from the point of view of the industrial reformer, diagonally across the middle class: it runs between workers and idlers, and is independent of class. Advanced labour movements have been greatly retarded in England, in comparison with the continent, by their proneness to rebuff middle-class sympathisers.

These circumstances conspired to make the Fabian Society, of which Shaw became the leader—he would, of course, say that, if there were any leaders, he was co-leader with Webb—the intellectual and middle-class wing of the Socialist movement. But we need not follow in detail the story of the Society, which Shaw has told so well in Tract 41. In 1888 the Fabians adopted the policy of permeating the Liberal Party. They helped to secure a majority of Progressives on the first London County Council. They captured the new Radical paper, the *Star*, "by a stage-army stratagem," and tempted other Radical

editors to borrow the elements of its success. They lured prominent politicians to address them, and "butchered them to make a Fabian holiday." They earned respect as economists, and Shaw read a Socialist paper to the Economic Section of the British Association at Bath (1888). Shaw, Webb, and Olivier became a "sort of Fabian Three Musketeers," or "the recognised swashbucklers of advanced economics." They smote friend and foe with equal gaiety. A couple of articles by Shaw in *To-day* (1888) poked terrible fun at "My Friend Fitzthunder," the revolutionary Socialist, and the great continental leaders were ridiculed for their rhetorical and delusive public oratory. Never before was war for a sacred issue conducted with such humanity; and certainly never before did a hundred men and women, with half a dozen able leaders, do more work and cause greater consternation. The activity of the three thousand Fabians to-day is a very pale reminiscence of the activity of those hundred Fabians of 1888-1889.

In this connection a word should be added before I conclude the historical account of Shaw's Socialist views. In 1906 I was privately urged to join the Society in order to support Mr H. G. Wells in a demand for a renewal of the "live policy," in opposition to the "dead hand" of the aging leaders. I did not think it graceful to enter at such a crisis. Mr Wells, who lost the battle, has recently said (*Labour Leader*, October 19th, 1903) that he pressed for a recognition of the endowment of motherhood, and left the Society in disgust when he saw how everything was sacrificed to the "vanity" of Mr and Mrs S. Webb. Prominent and neutral Fabians told me at the time that Wells fought the conservative influence of Shaw as vehemently as that of Sidney and

Beatrice Webb. His plea for larger and more vigorous action was chiefly defeated by Shaw.

This was the historical development of Shaw's position. Of the vast amount of work he did in the next ten years it is almost superfluous to speak. Until 1888, when he became musical critic, he lectured many times a week, and after 1888 lectured on most Sundays in the winter. As he had begun to make a small income by journalism in 1885, he refused to take any fee for his lectures. His attitude was often puzzling. About the beginning of the century he wrote a short and indifferent paper for a small weekly, which I was sub-editing, and received a fee of three guineas; which was treble the fee paid to any other in the history of the journal. His language, in refusing the cheque, was withering; even worse was his language about the poor sub-editor, who had been directed to cut three lines—of not the slightest importance—out of his paper in order to fit the page. It was, however, his firm rule not to accept money for propagandist work, and through all the vicissitudes of his financial experience he has expended his best powers on what he conceived to be the best service of his fellows without payment and with a fine indifference to the alienation of the public.

In 1897 he completed his education in the realities of life by becoming a Vestryman and Councillor of the St Pancras Borough Council. The Fabians had concentrated on the stimulation of municipal life, and Shaw entered the Council, by co-option. For six years he paid the closest attention to his work, and his experience reacted on his opinions. The municipal machinery seemed to him the most suitable for carrying out the industrial reform he desired, and he was encouraged to restrict the function of State-

government. On this experience and the reflections it inspired he published his chief Socialist work, "The Common Sense of Municipal Trading," which we will examine presently. It was issued on the eve of the municipal election of 1904, at which Shaw was a candidate, and its large suggestion of municipal work, with proportionate "debt" (in the popular sense), alarmed the electors and helped his opponents. But his scorn of tact and reserve was equally responsible. The education question was being fiercely discussed, and he shocked the extreme Nonconformists by his apparent concessions to the Church. He further inflamed them by dragging Voltaire into the electoral discussion; but it is not clear whether he said that they held the same ideas as Voltaire or (as is more likely) that Voltaire and he were the only two really religious men who ever lived.

For the last twenty years there has been little variation in his views, though there has been some vacillation, some change of emphasis, some distraction by more modern ideas of reform. Briefly, he is a Socialist of the most extreme type in the sense that he demands absolute equality of income in the social commonwealth; if exceptions were to be admitted, he would be disposed to grant the dustman more than the Attorney-General. The child is to inherit a fixed income from the State, and the State is to see that, in mature years, it is earned. In this Shaw goes far beyond his own associates and enters the company of the most extreme "enthusiasts." But he promptly differs from the extremists. He scorns democracy, restricts central government to the task of federating the municipalities, regards the idea of a revolution as melodramatic nonsense, and believes that if the enthusiasts could foresee the finished social common-

wealth they would abandon their enthusiasm for it. He is not at all sure that every industry will be socialised, and is fairly clear that some (letters, for instance) will not. He is still to a large extent an Anarchist-Socialist, and his whole creed is bent into characteristic and peculiar directions by his claim that happiness is far from being the end of man. Few Socialists agree with his version of the creed, as a whole. But his position will be best understood by an examination, in chronological order, of a few of his chief expositions of his beliefs.

The paper which he read to the British Association at Bath in 1886 was published some years afterwards in "Fabian Essays in Socialism." It is, in my opinion, the best statement of his creed, though he has in a few points advanced beyond it. It is titled "The Transition to Social Democracy," and opens with an historical account of the conversion of the narrow and ordered system of the Middle Ages into the vast industrial chaos of to-day. It is this chaos which the new economy would alter by socialising economic rent. It would "transfer rent and interest to the State, not in one lump sum, but by instalments"; a process which is being actually performed by income tax, death duties, Education and Factory Acts, and so on. The success of the Post Office encourages this experiment, while the frightful example of the appropriation of economic rent by individuals, as London grows and the leases "fall into the maw of the landlord," warns us of its necessity. On the other hand, it is useless for the State to appropriate the unearned income, which amounts to £500,000,000 a year in England, unless it is prepared to invest it in productive enterprise.

The present deadlock, which is due to the injustice

of the unearned income and the inability of the State to use it, must be terminated by a slow and experimental, but vast, extension of municipal industry. The workers have little to gain by their Trade Unions ; even in the matter of raising wages they have been but a fly on the wheel. The community must socialise industry through the municipal machinery. "The ground-landlord must be the milch-cow." With the appropriated economic rent (or "unearned increment" of ground-value, as it is popularly put) the municipality must take up one industry after another, and private employers will have to grant better conditions in order to retain their employees—until the formidable competition of the municipal employer annihilates them. With evident reluctance he grants that officials may be paid higher salaries than ordinary workers, but he trusts that the extension of real education will abolish this need by supplying a larger number of capable men. He sketches a concurrent reform of other branches of national, and of international, life, and bitterly regrets that this slow reform is all that can be urged. "Let me in conclusion," he says, "disavow all admiration for this inevitable, but sordid, slow, reluctant, cowardly path to justice." The revolutionary type of Socialism is more inspiring, as it promises the immediate abolition of squalor and poverty, but it is unhappily impracticable.

In reintroducing this essay to "the ordinary respectable Englishman"—the class assailed by the Fabians—Shaw rejoices in the progress that has been made. The extreme Socialists have been cast aside ; they are "romantic amateurs" and "represent nobody but their silly selves." [The onlooker, in every country, receives a shock when he listens to the language which the "comrades" in the various

branches of the millennium use toward each other.] On the other hand, Shaw says, "there is nobody left in the camp of our enemies except the ignorant, the politically imbecile, the corruptly interested, and the retinue of broken, drunken, reckless mercenaries who are always ready to undertake a campaign of slander against the opponents of any vested interest which has a bountiful secret service fund." This is Mr Shaw's idea of "chaffing" his opponents. One prefers the sobriety of the earlier essay, and it is of importance in showing the growth of his opinions. Practically all Socialists would, while leaving industry to the gradual extension of municipal activity, transfer the land, the mines, and the means of transit to the State. Shaw's anarchist contempt of "authority" and disdain of parliamentary democracy restrict the action of the State. At the same time one sees that he is being driven to take up the extreme position of equality of income. To say that education will alter the inequality of ability is a fallacy: the more gifted will rise still higher, and will always be a small minority. On the other hand, to say that there is in England an unearned income of £500,000,000 is equally misleading. A large amount of it represents income on capital which was *earned* and saved. One feels that Shaw will override his hesitation and demand equality, as he soon did.

It is not necessary to analyse here his debate with Mr Foote in the eight hours' question in 1891. The issue does not affect his general system. Foote was a much more skilful debater, but the historical and economic learning was all on Shaw's side. To the audience the debate must have been inconclusive.

He returned to the main theme in his "Common Sense of Municipal Trading" (1894). In opposition

to the stress he had laid on municipal activity, critics were everywhere urging its failure and ineptitude. Fortified by his years of experience as a Borough Councillor, Shaw boldly attacked them and produced his most important economic work. It is a clever appeal to the middle-class ratepayer, who was being scared by the appalling cartoons which were now beginning to deface London at every municipal election. Shaw depicts Mr Smith as being in a lamentable position from which Socialism alone can extricate him : the rich man empties one of his pockets to pay rent, the poor man empties the other to pay for education, insurance, poor relief, etc. The most serious point is, however, his contention that municipalities can raise capital more cheaply, and enlist ability more easily, than private companies. He does not plead for a rigid scheme of municipalisation ; some things may be done better by private enterprise. Shaw has always avoided *doctrinaire* rigidity as well as utopian forecasts. But he pleads that, when you take account of the indirect and moral profit as well as the direct and material, the municipality is the best employer.

There is, perhaps, in Socialist literature no subtler analysis of the advantage claimed for municipal service as contrasted with companies or "predatory capitalistic collectivism" (trusts). Take the drink traffic. Who, in admiring the brewer's profits, counts the cost to the community of the ravages of drunkenness ? Who reflects, in studying the balance-sheet of a dock-company, that the municipality has to maintain a hospital and a poor-house close at hand on account of its operations ? Who notices, in examining the municipal balance-sheet, what an indirect cost to the community it has saved by its sanitary

operations? And so on. Shaw concludes that, in order to undertake housing, the municipality must own the land; and that the various municipal bodies must be co-ordinated in a national Socialist scheme.

In 1896 he wrote for a foreign journal an article on "The Illusions of Socialism," which is republished in "Forecasts of the coming century": a volume of Socialist essays edited by Edward Carpenter. This extraordinary essay is one of the most pointed expressions of the purely personal features of Shaw's creed: one of those utterances which tempt even the Socialist to regard him as either eccentric or not serious, when he is both consistent and profoundly serious. Such expressions cannot be wholly understood until we have considered his entire attitude toward life, which, in its mysticism and asceticism—social as well as personal asceticism—makes his Socialist outlook very singular.

The enormous success of modern Socialism, especially on the continent, is due to its promise and depiction of a golden age. The revolutionary Socialist would inaugurate it by an Act of Parliament, at the cost of a pennyworth of parchment and ink; the evolutionary Socialist may grant that its realisation will take centuries. But they are agreed that the consequent state of things will be the millennium; a complete transformation of human life. Thoughtful Socialist leaders often smile at this childlike dream, but it is the great attraction and inspiration of the movement, and few dare publicly assail it. Since he outgrew his early illusions, Shaw has never flinched from disparaging this dream. However mistaken he may be at times, however violent and unjust toward those who differ from him, his opponents will hardly refuse to recognize his unwavering truth and outspokenness.

In this essay he hits hard at the "illusions" of the majority of his own followers. Few of them will find consolation in his assurance that illusions are "the mainspring of human activity," and that "there can no more be an illusion without a reality than a shadow without an object." It is not this prosy nucleus of reform, which he calls a reality, but this broad iridescent fringe, which he calls the halo of illusion, that fires the millions of European Socialists. Yet "Socialism, as it appears to ninety-nine out of every hundred of the ardent young Socialists who will read this book is an illusion"; which is a hard saying, not only for the ardent young men, but for the nine other Socialist writers who contribute to the volume. It is a good thing to aim at a millennium, but, if these young men foresaw the social commonwealth in its realisation, they would "despise and loathe it as a miserably prosaic bourgeois development and extension of the respectability of to-day." And Shaw had always said that respectability was the essential evil to attack.

The ingenious speculation which he goes on to offer does not redeem his bluntness. Like every other new reform, Socialism must be dramatised before it is taught as a science. It "must be hidden under a veil of illusions embroidered with promises, and provided with a simple mental handle for the grasp of the common mind." The capitalist must be the villain of the piece, and the worker the virtuous hero: the capitalist system is hell, the Socialist order will be heaven. "Socialism wins its disciples by presenting civilisation to them as a popular melodrama, or as a Pilgrim's Progress through trial and combat against the powers of evil to the bar of poetic justice with with paradise beyond." This will seem to most

people a deadly attack on Socialism, but Shaw is tolerant. He asks only the abandonment of "the cruder illusions," such as representing their opponents as fools or fiends: the one practice of which he himself is persistently guilty. Moreover, one of the chief intellectual roots of Socialism, Marx's theory, is "erroneous and obsolete," but Jevons, who annihilates it, is beyond the intelligence of Socialists. And, finally, the idea that all industries and professions must be socialised is the idea of "fanatics."

Such pronouncements made Shaw as puzzling to a large proportion of his friends as to the general public. There is, in point of fact, nothing strained or paradoxical about them; except the unconscious humour of recommending Socialists to drop the practice of flaying their opponents. It was the one "illusion" they ever learned of Shaw. But many Socialists—especially if they are not writers or orators, or if they speak in private—argue that the gain by a realisation of their scheme will be immeasurably less than most Socialists believe. Shaw was merely giving a good example of sincerity in saying so.

In 1901 he returned to the lighter vein, in his "Socialism for Millionaires." The efforts of Rhodes and Carnegie to get rid of their burden of gold attracted his sympathy. "The millionaire class, a small but growing one, into which any of us may be flung tomorrow by the accidents of commerce, is perhaps the most neglected in the community." He offers advice. They cannot devise means of spending millions on themselves: they must not debauch the workers by charity or waste their money in philanthropy. He admonishes Mr Carnegie with the fate of Ruskin, who gave to Sheffield a museum which "it does not want and would cheerfully sell for a fortnight's holiday,

with free beer, if it could." After this the millionaire-pupil must be surprised to hear Shaw lay down as the fundamental rule: "Never give the public anything they want: give them something they ought to want and don't." But possibly few millionaires were really embarrassed by reading the tract.

It is probable that it was rather the Socialists who were embarrassed by Shaw's scintillating progress during the first decade of this century. The gay fling at their illusions troubled them, and they wondered what would be the next phase of his development. At length, in the zenith of his influence, in the most powerful and widely-read of all his works, he seemed to desert them. In 1903 he published "Man and Superman," and the popularity of that brilliant play, especially in the United States, sent thousands to the book in expectation of the customary long preface. In this case there was not only a lengthy introduction; the play was followed by a "Revolutionist's Handbook" and by a whole arsenal of explosive epigrams which seemed calculated to blast every human belief and institution. They will be considered later from a broader point of view, but as they include a far more serious attack on "the illusions of Socialism," they must be noticed here.

The chief feature of the preface is a fierce tirade against democracy and scorn of the notion that it leads to progress. The preface is cast in the form of a letter to A. B. Walkley, his earlier Radical associate, and Shaw talks to him, with the freedom of the fireside, about the hallucinations of their youth. Democracy is "the last refuge of cheap misgovernment." He outdoes the scorn of Carlyle's "Latter-day Pamphlets," and complacently quotes Burke about a nation "under the hoofs of the swinish

multitude." He invites Walkley to recall Demos in the theatre. "What our voters are in the pit and gallery," he says, "they are also in the polling booth": full of stupidity and illusions. After winning the franchise from the plutocrats, they return the same plutocrats to power, and entrust the political machinery to "a mob of grown-up Eton boys" just at the time when its new and larger functions make it supremely important. If we had a perfect constitution, the ruling caste "would interpret it into mere fashionable folly or canting charity." He returns to the point in the "Revolutionist's Handbook." The Radical faith in universal suffrage "withers the moment it is exposed to practical trial." Switzerland, Australia, Canada, France, the United States—he sweeps aside every instance. We muddle through "like an elephant in a jungle." The people will have a leader who "holds popular convictions with prodigious energy," and will not lend an ear to the "frail meliorist," unless he "happens by accident to have the specific artistic talent of the mountebank as well."

This is by no means new in Shaw. He always disdained democracy, the hope of orthodox Liberal and Labour men, who thought it sufficed without economic changes. But there is an entirely new note in the preface and the Handbook. He now finds that the question of the unequal distribution of wealth is not very important, because it "does not threaten the existence of the race, but only the individual happiness of its units." One would imagine that Shaw is beginning to reflect that all his early zeal for an equitable distribution of wealth is not very consistent in an anti-moralist, anti-sentimentalist, anti-idealist, and anti-hedonist. But we remember that he is also an

anti-rationalist, and need not give a rational ground for his enthusiasm.

The new motive is really seen in his concern about "the existence of the race." He labours hard to prove that we are rapidly going to the dogs. Progress is an illusion, education a total failure, idealism bankrupt. He invites Walkley to smile at these enthusiasms of their youth. We are going backward in spite of them all. [I postpone until a later chapter the examination of his evidence of this.] You can't make a silk purse out of a sow's ear. Socialism is quite right when it says that, *if* we would do certain things, all would be well; but we won't do them. The nation is too feeble and stupid to listen. With such an audience both the Fabian and the revolutionary Socialist are "fundamentally futile." If we brought about a revolution, "the dog would return to its vomit": witness France and the United States. "Man will return to his idols and his cupidities, in spite of all 'movements' and all revolutions, until his nature is changed." "And so," he concludes, "we arrive at the end of the Socialist's dream of the socialisation of the means of production and exchange." Positivists, Ethicists, and all other idealists, are just as futile. "The only fundamental and possible Socialism is the socialisation of the selective breeding of man. . . . We must eliminate the Jahoo, or his vote will wreck the Commonwealth."

In the last phrases you have the key to this remarkable aberration from a life-ideal. The old love has been discarded for a moment in favour of Mlle. Eugenics, the latest attraction in the world of reform. I will consider later how Shaw's philosophy inclined him to accept this new panacea, and what dark brooding over the faults of our age led him to

the conviction that the superman must be bred, not evolved out of the present generation. It is enough for the moment that in 1903 he thrust his Socialism aside, and thought that he had found a shorter cut to the promised land. The question may be raised whether the "Revolutionist's Handbook," in which this is more plainly stated, is not really part of the drama: whether its exaggerations should not rather be regarded as the opinions of John Tanner than of Bernard Shaw. That Tanner in the play is Shaw—at first the actor deliberately made up as Shaw—we all know, but may not the dramatist's licence and impersonality count for something? Unfortunately, the preface, though it does not explicitly mention Socialism, says the same things. It describes democracy, education, and progress as illusions, and insists that the task before us is the breeding of the new man, or superman. It is in the preface, too, that Shaw slights the problem of poverty because it "does not threaten the existence of the race." There is no doubt that in 1903 Shaw's Socialist faith was under a cloud.

And within two years it came out into the sunshine once more. He holds strongly to the eugenic ideal to-day, but he now regards Socialism as a necessary preliminary to eugenics. The return of the pendulum is plainly seen in "Major Barbara," which he published in 1905. The play itself is not so much a study of the Salvation Army or of the problem of tainted money—the public naturally seized the obvious points—as a characteristic sermon on the virtues of money and the vices of poverty. Shaw has entirely changed his mind again about the importance of the unequal distribution of wealth. The preface loudly asserts that poverty is "the greatest of evils and the worst

of crimes." It is singular how many of Shaw's expressions seem to be faithful echoes of the thunder of Carlyle's "Latter-day Pamphlets," which so deeply shocked Radicals; but, of course, the underlying principle is different. Carlyle regarded the poor man as an individual criminal, as responsible for his poverty as a thief or a liar is for his delinquency: Shaw takes a social view. "Security, the chief pretence of civilisation, cannot exist where the worst of dangers, the danger of poverty, hangs over everyone's head." It is the main source of filth, disease, crime, and incompetence, and we are stupid to tolerate it.

It would be an improvement on the present order to abolish the penal laws against burglary and make poverty a crime. Seriously, he suggests, we ought to pay every man a salary and "see that he earns it." As to the colossal task of "seeing that he earns it," Shaw merely throws out hints at a lethal chamber. Many would agree; but, when you have chloroformed the entirely inept and lazy, there remains a gradation of ineptitude and laziness that would paralyse the efforts of an industrial police. The interesting thing is that Shaw is returning to the position that equality of income is the first reform. One would almost fancy that his asceticism is relenting, he insists so much on money. "Thanks to our political imbecility and personal cowardice (fruits of poverty both), the best imitation of a good life now procurable is life on an independent income." And again: "The universal regard for money is the one hopeful fact in our civilisation, the one sound spot in our social conscience. It represents health, strength, honour, generosity, and beauty as conspicuously and undeniably as the want of it represents illness, weakness, disgrace, meanness, and ugliness."

So the Socialist ideal—Shaw disdains ideals and is bursting with them—was reconciled with the Eugenic ideal, and a peaceful *ménage à trois* set up. Two indications will suffice to show how this has become Shaw's final and unwavering creed. They are oral declarations, and therefore more valuable, because Shaw had not time to think out an exaggerated or humorous form of expression.

One is found in a series of articles in the *Labour Leader* (March 31st, 1911, and following) by the editor, A. Fenner Brockway. Shaw was catechised, over the fireside, by a group of Socialists, and—he told the truth. The Independent Labour Party, to which they belonged, is—some may need to be informed—intermediate between the Fabians and the extreme Socialists: much nearer, in fact, to the Fabian moderation. Shaw bluntly told his hearers that the moderate proposals of Fabians and members of the I.L.P. are not Socialism at all. He means by Socialism just what the man in the street conceives it to be: “A system of society where all the income of the country is to be divided up in exactly equal proportions.” Whereon the Socialist editor observes: “We gasped!” Only extreme Socialists dream of this rigid equality. Mr Brockway is, in fact, puzzled by Shaw's “sudden zeal for equality,” but I have shown that he had long entertained it.

By a simple sum in arithmetic Shaw made his picture alluring. “Suppose the national income is divided by the number of the population, and you find the result is £500.” Very many of us will be prepared to consider the equalisation of income if it means that every man, woman, and child will receive £500 a year. Indeed, what with the asphyxiation of incorrigible idlers and the conversion of unproductive

workers into productive, the figure ought to rise still higher. I imagine myself and wife and four children drawing £700 a year each from the national exchequer, and am quite willing to depose millionaires to attain that result. But I find, on comparing the number of the population (40,000,000) and the annual national income (£2,000,000,000) that the result would be only £50 per year.¹

Shaw gives three reasons why the national income ought to be equally divided. First, the possession of equal money by all is the only way of securing that the needs of all shall be met before any luxuries are produced; secondly, there will be no real democratic government until wealth is equal (a statement which scarcely harmonises with experience in Australasia); thirdly, the eugenic reform cannot be carried out while there are inequalities of wealth and caste. This equalisation is to be secured in the way we have already seen: by the gradual extension of municipal industry and ownership, the State being only the centralisation of the municipalities. Not only are mothers and all women to be endowed, but the drunkard and the blackguard, the child and even the baby, are to have their £50 a year. "The moment you are born you should have £50 a year": and not more in your prime. Then the State must see that you earn it. This is quite simple, Mr Shaw now finds. You put each individual on trial every five years, and, if he or she has not produced as much as he or

¹ In the next article Mr Brockway gives the figure as £50 a year, and one may think the earlier figure a misprint. I do not think so. Fifty pounds a year is too ludicrous an ideal to hold out, and Shaw clearly and emphatically (as we shall see) insists that the income is to be divided between the total population—men, women, *and children*. His zeal for equality largely rested on a statistical mistake.

she has consumed, off with him or her to the lethal chamber.

After reading this remarkable account of his views, even Socialists observed that Shaw could not expect them to take him seriously. But he was—I will not insist on the five years and the lethal chamber too rigorously—in deep earnest. One distinguished Socialist remarked to me a year or two ago, in conversation, that Shaw was showing signs of age. This also is wrong. I heard him speak at the City Temple recently (October 30th, 1913), and precisely the same creed was unfolded, syllable for syllable, with the gravest emphasis and with every indication that this mental energy is still magnificent and his judgment cold and clear as ever. He was speaking on “Christian Economics.” The Christianity of it I examine later: the economic was the same as in 1911. Every child was to come into a birthright of an equal portion of the national income. Only in this way could we secure a full supply of necessities before luxuries, a proper administration of justice, and the free practice of eugenics. He scouted the idea that political democracy or economic collectivism implied any moral progress (in the broadest sense): he drew from his ascetic and mystic principles the conclusion that man’s duty is to develop his spiritual powers: and, after outraging their religious feelings and setting forth ideals with which hardly a soul in the room agreed, he was boisterously cheered by fifteen hundred City Templars. It was a fine tribute—to the man.

It is hardly necessary in the end to summarise or criticise Shaw’s Socialism, as I stated its characteristic features at the outset. He agrees with the extreme Socialists in demanding equality of income, but differs violently from them in estimating the effect of this

and the way to attain it, and heaps contempt on their rhetoric and their economic science. He agrees with the moderate Socialists in believing that the process of socialisation will be gradual and businesslike, and possibly not complete, but disdains them because they will not embrace equality of income—in the babe and the man, the defective and the inventor—and because they trust education and democratic government. And in his ascetic and irrational conception of the base of Socialism he finds himself in agreement only with a few mystically-minded Socialists like Mr Webb. These things have, for the last twenty years, prevented Socialists from deriving as much advantage from the adherence of so powerful a writer as they had hoped to do. The only work of his which they urge—and it has had a very small circulation for a work of the size—is his "Common Sense of Municipal Trading." It is his fierce critical work which they generally applaud.

One hears it said at times that he is dangerous to his friends because he is whimsical, paradoxical, irresponsible in his utterances. This is incorrect. He is by no means a model of consistency from year to year, but he is generally serious and consistent, though he may wave a red flag of exaggeration to draw the bull. The truth is that his fundamental creed, his deeper view of life, is peculiar, and must be carefully studied before we approach the bewildering and pyrotechnic discharge of criticisms and affirmations which splutters in the life of England during his period of dramatic production. We have already seen how his economic reasoning is complicated by mystic considerations and ascetic sentiments. You cannot even understand his Socialism until you understand these other elements which have given it a peculiarly personal form.

CHAPTER III

THE SHAVIAN PHILOSOPHY

MR SHAW'S principal biographer observes that, although he does not claim to be great, he does claim to be a philosopher. That is, perhaps, one of the unkindest disservices which Dr Henderson has rendered to his subject. I am, of course, not thinking of academic philosophy, of which no one would expect Shaw to have any knowledge. But even if the word be taken in its broader sense, as a title accorded to any man who has endeavoured to systematise his particular views of life by tracing all happenings to a fundamental reality, it is unwise to apply it to Mr Shaw. He has a theory of life, in the comprehensive and fundamental sense, but it is hardly deep enough, or sufficiently grounded on positive knowledge, to merit the high title of a philosophy. It is an intellectual attitude in the development of which personal sympathies and antipathies have counted for much more than a scrutiny of realities ; and it is an attitude which, as a natural consequence, takes no account of the progress of knowledge, and is already in large part antiquated.

Yet it is essential to study what is called Shaw's philosophy, if one would understand his position on the detailed problems of life. A man's philosophy or creed has frequently no relation to his practical attitude. Huxley affected to believe that we have no confident knowledge of the existence of a material

universe, yet he is to many—not unnaturally—the arch-materialist of the nineteenth century. Rockefeller professes a deep admiration for the Sermon on the Mount. Many people believe implicitly that they are going to heaven, yet make heroic efforts to remain out of it as long as possible. Shaw is too virile and candid for this. His philosophy actively shapes his views: especially his ethical views, from which the most distinctive and audacious of his opinions are derived. Indeed, in the last ten years this philosophy has grown larger and more dogmatic in his mind, and nearly every utterance is at once related to it. We have already seen how even his ideas of social reform are modified by mystic considerations of which we had to defer the explanation. We shall see that his characteristic ideas about morality also are grounded on this deeper theory of life. In this he believes that he improves upon Nietzsche and Ibsen.

Perhaps it will be well to give at once an outline of his philosophy. In describing it as "antiquated" I did not mean that Shaw was clinging in comparative loneliness to one of those ancient wrecks which float in the current of thought. As far as the first principle of his creed goes, he is in high company. A brilliant French philosopher, Professor Bergson, has recently brought it into discussion again throughout the civilised world. Sir Oliver Lodge has defended it for two decades; and, what is more important to those who know anything about the subject, Professor A. Thompson, and Principal Lloyd Morgan, and a group of able biologists and embryologists on the continent, defend it. Except Bergson, however, whose philosophy is nearest in substance to that accepted by Shaw, these scientific men would reject the rather poetical form in which Shaw conceives the "Life-

Force," and certainly not one of them would sanction for a moment Shaw's opposition to Darwinism. I do not think there is one scientific man or philosopher in Europe or the United States—except, in some measure, the Rev. Professor Henslow—who would endorse Shaw's philosophy on this point; and you must share Shaw's disdain of authority to be indifferent to that fact.

There are, according to the Shavian philosophy, two fundamental realities: "matter" and the Life-Force. Matter is, or may be, eternal. At a point in time (as far as our planet is concerned) the other and spiritual reality, the Life-Force, pervades matter and begins to build its atoms into simple living things, which it animates. Then comes the long story of the evolution of life, the ascent from level to level of organisation. Some (materialists) hold that this upward procession was due to the struggle of living things and the changes in their surroundings: some (theists) believe that it was directed by a supreme intelligence; and some (vitalists) contend that the Life-Force advanced, unconsciously but by native impulse, in certain definite directions. In adopting the latter view Shaw is still in respectable company, though when he goes on to deny the struggle for life and survival of the fittest, he stands alone. Then comes the important practical and religious bearing of this creed. It gives Shaw a religion because he is prepared to call the Life-Force God, and thinks it may yet become omniscient and omnipotent. It gives him a basis for his ethic, and so colours his whole outlook, because it identifies his will with the Life-Force—identifies God and man—and justifies his scorn of external rules and authorities. It justifies his disdain of reason and rationalism, because it makes will or impulse the

primary and true expression of the supreme force. It rationalises his belief in the Superman—to say nothing of his conception of woman, the artist, and other particular types—by showing that this ever-advancing power *must* go on to a still higher level; and it explains his deliberate asceticism, since man's highest work is to co-operate with the “will of God”—the Life-Force.

His philosophy is, therefore, no academic speculation, but a vital part of every important opinion he has expressed. If a man or woman affects to be a Shavian and discards this philosophy, his or her creed is superficial and disjointed. It is the mainspring in Andrew Undershaft and John Tanner, in Major Barbara and Ann Whitefield, and scores of other characters at whom we have lightly laughed. The Shavian creed, in so far as it is constructive, falls to pieces if you reject this theoretical bond.

In order to understand how Shaw came to adopt this theory of the Life-Force we must return for a moment to his history. He landed on this shoal by trying to steer between Scylla and Charybdis, between Christianity and Rationalism. I have already described this in general terms. At an early age he rejects his religious beliefs and embraces the spirit of the Zetetical Society. Then, mainly on account of the supposed social implications of Darwinism, he sees a whirlpool in Rationalism and backs away from it. He then discovers the theory of Samuel Butler, who explains the universe without either Christianity or Darwinism, and puts an unconscious mind or life-force in nature. Later he finds that Schopenhauer has made an impressive philosophy of this idea of a great impulse or will pushing upward in nature, and he sees its moral

implications. We may examine these stages, or phases, of his creed more closely.

We saw that in the 'eighties he called himself an "atheist," and joined in fierce assaults on Christianity at the Zetetical Society. Captain Wilson used to call it "Crosstianity," and Shaw speaks of this years afterwards, in his "Quintessence of Ibsenism," as an "apt name." Though he has ceased to call himself an atheist, and begun to call himself a theist, he has not in the least modified his antagonism to Christian theology. In 1896, in his essay "On going to Church" (*Savoy*), he merely recommends people to go at a time when there is no service, and he ends a remarkable and flippant confession of faith with the words: "And I regard St Athanasius as an irreligious fool—that is, in the only serious sense of the word, a damned fool." In the preface to "Man and Superman" and the "Handbook" he is just as hostile: "Christianity means nothing to the masses but a sensational public execution," and "We have relapsed into disputes about transubstantiation at the very moment when the discovery of the wide prevalence of theophagy as a tribal custom has deprived us of the last excuse for believing that our official rites differ in essentials from those of barbarians." In the preface to "Major Barbara" (1905) he repeats this: "Popular Christianity has for its emblem a gibbet, for its chief sensation a sanguinary execution after torture, and for its central mystery an insane vengeance bought off by a trumpery expiation."

His association with the City Temple and its liberal preacher in recent years has led some to think that he was moderating his antagonism to Christianity, and some of the abler writers on him, like Julius Bab and Dr Henderson, call him a Protestant or Neo-

Protestant. He has himself used the phrase, but it is wholly misleading. In 1908 he wrote to the *Freethinker* (November 1st) to deny that there was any material approach to Christianity in his development. "I loathe," he said, "the mess of mean superstitions and misunderstood prophecies which is still rammed down the throats of the children of this country under the name of Christianity as contemptuously as ever." All that has happened is that, while he used to regard the Christ of the Gospels as wholly fictitious and impossible, Mr R. J. Campbell has made the figure plausible, in the human sense. The Christian God is still to him what he described in his reply to Nordau in 1895: "a frightfully jealous and vindictive old gentleman sitting on a throne above the clouds," and "heaven is a sort of bliss which would bore any active person to a second death."

His relation to the liberal form of Christianity which is taught at the City Temple was well shown on a recent occasion, to which I have already referred. Speaking from the pulpit of Dr Parker on "Christian Economics," and premising that he "did not profess to be a Christian," he laid down the conditions of an *entente*; and they were peremptorily rejected by Mr Campbell.¹ Christ, he said, was the first and last Christian; the question was whether they should restore his teaching—it was a matter of complete indifference to him whether it was real or mythical—and whether Mr Shaw could co-operate with them. To make that possible they must surrender, not only hell and heaven, which he notoriously derides, but every pretence of a doctrine of atonement. Vindictive

¹ The proceedings of this remarkable meeting, on October 30, 1913, were not accurately reported. I write from the notes which I took at the time.

punishment is one of the things he most abhors in life, and he will not have the central doctrine of the Christian scheme—fall and expiation—in any form. Mr Campbell said at the close that in this they emphatically dissented from Mr Shaw.

But it seemed to me that Mr Campbell's emphatic dissent was really due to a deeper and more chilling heresy on the part of Mr Shaw, which it was indiscreet to recall to the audience. He had insisted on the "immanence" of God. New theologians and amateur theologians are fond of imagining that in this they rise superior to the "old theology," whereas every great theologian of the Middle Ages, and all other ages, taught the immanence of God. The real issue is whether you *identify* God with the spirit of man. Now even Mr Campbell believes that God was a supreme, intelligent Being before man appeared, and Mr Shaw holds the opposite: God is the Life-Force which, as far as we know, has reached its high-water mark in man.

And from this he drew a conclusion which sent a shiver throughout the crowded chapel. A friend had, he said, recently died and gone to heaven. [All the youths and maidens who had come to hear Shavian jokes leaned forward with beaming expectancy at this solitary promise of humour.] To St Peter, at the gate, he explained that he wanted to have a word with the Almighty. When Peter demurred, and the man insisted, Paul, Moses, and other ancients were summoned to a council. [The smile slowly disappeared, and the hundreds of Christian faces became graver and graver.] They decided that the man had a right to "see" God, and conducted him across the golden streets to a sort of cathedral, where "a melancholy old man" sat on a gorgeous throne

above the altar. The man was advancing toward him, when Peter drew him back. "We have," he whispered, "granted you your right to see God, but you cannot speak to him because—between ourselves—God has gone mad." And on the awed silence of the vast audience broke the cold and relentless assurance of the lecturer: "That is what is wrong with the world: the God in us has gone mad."

It seems not only an interesting point in itself to make clear Bernard Shaw's attitude on religion, but that attitude has a most important bearing on his ethical and even social opinions. This will appear later, and I will briefly sum up his hostility to the prevailing creed. He is drastically opposed to it, even in its most liberal forms. He scorns even the new-theology notion that God was alienated from man and a reconciliation was needed. He despises the belief in personal immortality—"I neither believe in it nor desire it," he says—and has heavily caricatured heaven and hell (in "Man and Superman"). He thinks the notion of a Superior Being creating, or directing the evolution of, inferior beings, especially by a process of cruelty, "a horrible old idea." His God is merely the Life-Force which has at length reached consciousness in the brain of man, will one day be the Superman, and may eventually be something higher. A two-edged sword lies between Shaw and the Christian Church.

And the next point in the interpretation of his creed is that he is equally alienated from Rationalism. In the letter to the *Freethinker* which I have previously quoted he says, after expressing his contempt of Christianity: "But I am contemptuously and implacably anti-rationalist and anti-materialist." Throughout the whole of his writings you find a scorn

of "the revival of tribal soothsaying and idolatrous rites which Huxley called science and mistook for an advance on the Pentateuch." Rationalism is a system of "syllogism-worship with rites of human sacrifice." Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, etc., are the most mischievous seducers of mankind since Torquemada, and their doctrine of evolution is the most devastating influence that has ever fallen on human thought.

The way in which Shaw reaches this singular position—singular in an anti-Christian—is instructive. We first find a strong and clear expression of it in his "*Quintessence of Ibsenism*" (1891). He finds in Ibsen, or reads into Ibsen, traces of "how well he knew the crushing weight with which the sordid cares of the ordinary struggle for money and respectability fell on the world when the romance of the creeds was discredited, and progress seemed for the moment to mean, not the growth of the spirit of man, but an effect of the survival of the fittest brought about by the destruction of the unfit, all the most frightful examples of this systematic destruction being thrust into the utmost prominence by those who were fighting the Church with Mill's favourite dialectical weapon, the incompatibility of divine omnipotence with divine benevolence" (p. 59). As Shaw observes soon afterwards that Ibsen never "saw through" natural selection, we may take this as a piece of pure Shawianism read into Ibsen. The essay is, in fact, one of Shaw's most careful pieces of work and puts very clearly his position in 1890. He not only opposes natural selection, but rejects the very principle of Rationalism—the supremacy of reason in matters of opinion—and may almost be said to have anticipated Bergson in substituting instinct for reason. Rational-

ism discards tradition, and then finds "a creative dynamic power" in reason: a description of reason which is certainly not used by Rationalists. They do, however, take reason as a guide in the investigation of reality, and Mr Shaw thinks theologians may justly retort that "perhaps the conclusions of an Ecumenical Council of learned and skilled Churchmen might be more trustworthy than the first crop of cheap syllogisms excogitated by a handful of raw Rationalists in their sects of 'Freethinkers' and 'Secularists' and 'Positivists' and 'Dont Knowists' (Agnostics)."

To speak of the brilliant array of historians (from Gibbon to Bury), of philosophers (from Hume to Bosanquet), and of scientists (from Darwin to Haeckel)—at least half of the ablest men of the last century and a half—as "a handful of raw Rationalists," and ask us to bow rather to the proceedings of the Vatican Council or a Church Congress, is merely to show that Mr Shaw occasionally *does* succeed in substituting impulse for intelligence. We suspect a prejudice, and already in 1890 we find it acknowledged. "No sooner," he says, "has the Rationalist triumphed over the theologian than he forthwith sets up as binding on all men the duty of acting logically with the object of securing the greatest good of the greatest number, with the result that he is presently landed in Vivisection, Contagious Diseases Acts, dynamite conspiracies, and other grotesque but strictly reasonable abominations." This completes his case against Rationalism, and, as his biographers usually slur over the fundamental principles of his creed and leave his opinions disjointed and eccentric, I will examine it point by point.

The first point in his aversion from Rationalism

seems to have been the conviction that evolution by natural selection (or Darwinism) is an inadequate explanation of the facts of life-development. He is fond of defining natural selection as (to quote the preface to "The Doctor's Dilemma") "that method of evolution which has neither sense nor purpose nor life nor anything human, much less godlike, in it (meaning no selection at all, but mere dead accident or luck)." There are still a few biologists who hold that natural selection does not suffice unless you add that the principle of life was definitely directed. But Shaw is almost alone against the biological world in denying natural selection altogether. As he knows nothing about biology, we need pay no serious attention to this. He has made the same mistake as Carlyle and Tolstoi, and paid the same price for it. He is, in point of fact, merely repeating the criticisms which Samuel Butler brought against Darwinism forty years ago. Of the vast evidence accumulated by biology in the last forty years he knows nothing.

I may add that his Life-Force is hardly commendable as an alternative hypothesis, quite apart from the fact that the great majority of physiologists deny its existence. It is supposed to be unconscious, until it attains consciousness in man, yet to have a purpose and to direct matter; and, when it reaches consciousness in man, it shows a thousand contradictory purposes and no common element. Let me contrast the two ways of explaining things. In Shaw's view woman pursues man, instead of man wooing woman. This is, he says, because the Life-Force has embodied in her its "purpose" of fertility and reproduction. We puzzle hopelessly over these purposes of a vague, impersonal, unconscious force, and ask what natural selection would make of the same phenomenon. The

biologist would point out, in terms of natural selection, that if ten in a hundred women are more active in seeking husbands than the other ninety, they will be the more likely to marry, and breed more than the passive and retiring ninety; and that, if the process goes on long enough, the pursuing woman will be the selected type. This is checked, however, by a silly convention among civilised people that woman must be coy and passive, and the natural woman has to proceed somewhat hypocritically (like Ann Whitefield). On the other hand, the economic dependence of woman on man encourages her to seek a husband, and not wait to be sought, and so we get the state of things on which Mr Shaw philosophises. I venture to think that the only disadvantage of this "materialistic" explanation is that it is rational and intelligible.

On this purely biological point, however, we may entirely ignore Shaw's opinion. It is only a faint echo of the antiquated difficulties of Samuel Butler. We may also pass lightly over an attempt that he makes sometimes, which Dr Henderson has taken seriously, to assail Darwinism directly. The fact, ~~he~~ says, that "natural selection only accounted for progress at all on the hypothesis of a continuous increase in the severity of the conditions of existence—that is, on an assumption of just the reverse of what was actually taking place—appears to have escaped Ibsen as completely as it escaped Professor Huxley himself." There is no such implication in Darwinism. The fact that during the greater part of the story of life on earth struggle was the great condition of progress does not mean in the least that it will continue. This fallacy (much used by anti-Socialists) has been exploded scores of times. The increasing function of human intelligence and emotion

is to reduce the struggle. Dr Wallace has shown that evolution by social co-operation has been frequent among the higher animals, and what we call artificial selection, by which we now produce new species in an infinitely shorter time than nature could do, absolutely does away with the severe struggle which characterised unconscious nature. The difficulty is purely imaginary. So Shaw is miles astray when he says that "this gloomy fortress of pessimism and materialism" has been demolished "with ridiculous ease" by the working class. The fortress never existed, except in the imagination of people who did not know biology but wrote very dogmatically about it.

This obstinacy of Mr Shaw in clinging to ancient formulæ while the world marches on—the deadliest of sins from his point of view—requires a further explanation. We may agree with Ibsen that the minority is generally right and the majority generally wrong. But that is before the battle. When the fight is over, there is apt to be a minority still holding the old views out of sheer obstinacy or lack of knowledge, and *that* minority is worse than a majority. In this case Mr Shaw lingers among the small minority of the reactionary and the prejudiced. His only companions are Jesuit writers and uncultivated Methodists: the types he usually regards as too low even for him to stoop to attack. There is, of course, some reason for his obstinacy.

The chief reason is that the scientific men whose authority in their own department he derides are generally utilitarians and defend vivisection and meat-eating. There is no necessary connection between Darwinism (or materialism) and vivisection, but biologists are more apt than poets or theologians to seek justification of a scientific practice. Ingersoll

was a stern opponent of vivisection, as many Rationalists are to-day. Physiologists like Huxley, however, are naturally more prone than clergymen to vindicate vivisection, and Shaw pours a broadside of scorn into them. Darwinians are "a mob of futile cowards" to a great extent (*Freethinker*, Nov. 1st, 1908) : Huxley and Tyndall were mere popularisers of Darwin and Helmholtz: George Eliot's novels contain "the sweepings of a Pentonville omnibus." And so on. The great part that Rationalists have played in the reform-movements of the nineteenth century (notably in gaining that liberty which Mr Shaw enjoys) is completely ignored. They dared to think that vivisection served the interest of mankind, or that man had a right to derive profit from the sufferings of animals.

We will come to vivisection later. For the moment it is the general utilitarian principle, on which many Rationalists defend vivisection, that Shaw scornfully rejects. In this he partly follows his ascetic temperament, accentuated by the ascetic conditions of his early manhood, and partly builds on his mystic theory of the Life-Force. As a matter of fact, Rationalists are by no means all utilitarians, and the theory has no necessary connection with Darwinism. We may, however, now dismiss the subject of science and Darwinism. On a few fallacious grounds, and because scientific men generally defend vivisection and vaccination and meat-eating, Mr Shaw chooses to remain an anti-Darwinian in the year 1913. A peculiar position for the arch-enemy of prejudice and conservatism. But it must be understood that this is no idle speculation on his part ; his opposition to science and Darwinism is an essential element of his philosophy and a persistent note in his work.

Butler, and his own feeling that Darwinism was opposed to Socialism, induced him to take up this critical attitude. Some acquaintance with Schopenhauer completed his development. Again we find it fully stated in the "Quintessence of Ibsenism," which he wrote in 1890. He finds that the vague Life-Force has already been erected into a philosophy by Schopenhauer under the name of "Will": the great eternal reality behind all phenomena. This was merely an exaggerated reaction on Hegel's philosophy, which taught that "Reason" was the supreme reality. Modern thought discards both. In fact, we no longer believe in will and reason as separate "faculties," or any faculties at all, and these speculations are only interesting historically. But Shaw combines the antiquated authority of Schopenhauer with the antiquated authority of Butler: makes a twisted lash for the shoulders of the Rationalist—who smiles. Schopenhauer's "Will" has less life in it to-day than Hegel's "Reason." We know will and reason only as different aspects of man's mental life, and each has its own province: reason perceives, and will directs the executive machinery. To make will take the place of reason is like attempting to use a dynamo as a search-light. Mr Shaw never does this in practice, of course, any more than Bergson or Schopenhauer.

But Schopenhauer's theory gives him his last weapon against Rationalism, and a means of interpreting Wagner and Ibsen (two great Rationalists). The will is "the prime motor," the "motive force," and so on. No Rationalist ever doubted it. So we must cast aside "rational rules of conduct" as well as theological: which does not follow in the least, and neither Ibsen nor Wagner nor Shaw has acted

thus. In his *Saturday Review* articles (1895) we find him saying : " In all the life that has energy enough to be interesting to me, subjective volition, passion, will, make intellect the merest tool." It is strange that Shaw's readers and dramatic audiences complain that he is over-intellectual, a cold reasoning machine. Schopenhauer has shown, he says, that " the intellect by itself is a mere dead piece of brain-machinery, and our ethical and moral systems merely the pierced cards you stick into it when you want it to play a certain tune." Here you have the quintessence of Shaw's psychological confusion. Ibsen, at least, would talk differently ; he would say that the ethical systems are the dead product of *other people's brains*, and the right thing is to use your own brain on your problems. Assert your will, by all means, but reason out your position first. To talk of deposing reason in favour of will is not merely to give bad advice, which Shaw himself never follows : it is to talk of impossibilities. Reason and will are the same mental energy in two different aspects. We call the mind " reason " in so far as it is cognitive, and " will " in so far as it is conative, and to confuse the two is simply playing with words. What Ibsen certainly means, and Shaw really does, is to press people to consult their own reason and act on their own will, not on the reason and will of others, whether living authorities or fossilised rules ; though Ibsen, and even Shaw at times, as we shall see, take rational account of the effect on others of our actions. In any case, will and sentiment, which are the motive forces of conduct, cannot stir until the intelligence sets them in motion, or lights the way.

We need hardly notice other anti-rational arguments of Mr Shaw. The fact that some things

(consciousness, for instance) remain obscure after all our research only proves that they are very complex. What light does "will" throw on them? It is equally idle to attempt to draw a moral from Voltaire's joke to the poor poet who excused his bad verses on the ground that one must live: "I don't see the need." Shaw says that, when Rationalism destroyed the romance of heaven, yet found itself unable to improve earth for the majority, it ought to have agreed with Schopenhauer that it was desirable to put an end to the scheme of things. Because they would not agree to die, Shaw says, they abandoned reason for mysticism. On the contrary, the doctrine of evolution gave them every reason to believe that the world will improve, and there are few great Rationalists who have not helped in the work of betterment. Even Huxley fought generously for the education of the masses. Mill fought heroically. And if Mr Shaw quarrels with the narrowness of their ideals, we may remind him that the overwhelming majority of Socialist workers outside of England are Rationalists and dissent emphatically from his opinions.

In thus steering clear of Scylla and Charybdis, Christianity and Rationalism, Mr Shaw went straight for a shoal.¹ He became a mystic of an unusual type. The Life-Force, the vague agency which entered into matter and pushes upward through it in an advancing series of organisms, is the central reality. Ages ago it built up the matter of the earth into microbes. It animates the fly and the flea, the mussel and the man, to-day. Through human

¹ Curiously enough, the day after I had written this, the papers announced that the commander of an Italian warship had, in steering between Scylla and Charybdis, run on the reef beyond at a rate of twenty knots an hour.

development it is ascending to greater heights. Next it will shine in the brain of the Superman ; it will go on until it becomes the mind of an archangel : it may eventually attain omniscience and omnipotence. It is God in the making. Let me make a few observations on this before I show how it is the basis of Shaw's ethic.

In earlier times men believed that there were two fundamental realities, matter and spirit. Modern criticism threw doubt on this clear opposition, but just at that time scientists began to talk of " forces " or " energies " in nature. Men like Butler found this idea of " force " very convenient ; it seemed quite scientific to imagine a " vital force," or Life-Force, as the mainspring of evolution. At that point Mr Shaw embraced it. Butler was just the kind of writer to attract him : brilliant, rebellious, ironical, paradoxical, scornful of conventions, morals, and religion. It is interesting that in Butler's " *Erewhon* " (published in 1872), a paradoxical satire of civilisation, we find poverty regarded as a crime, money lauded as a power, moral values slighted, the administration of justice caricatured, the relations of parents and children represented as bad, Darwinism derided, and all sorts of Shavian ideas. I do not suggest that Shaw borrowed these ideas, but that they warmly recommended Butler to him ; and we know that he read Butler before he wrote the " Quintessence of Ibsenism," at least.¹

Since 1880, however, science has moved. It has established Darwinism beyond question and made the Life-Force very questionable. A physicist like Sir Oliver Lodge would tell Shaw that " force " is

¹ But Butler's novel, " *The Way of All Flesh*," to which Shaw refers, was not published until 1903.

not a reality at all, but an abstraction, a mere expression for certain aspects of matter. Shaw may say that he is not wedded to the word "force"—though so far he has taken no notice whatever of Sir Oliver Lodge's criticisms, and does not seem to be aware of their existence—but believes in a vital something. Seeing that he knows nothing of biology, and that such a belief can only be of value when it is a serious deduction from the facts, we are not much impressed ; but there is a further point. This "vital something" in the organism has been under sharp discussion among biologists for thirty years, and the overwhelming majority of them reject it. Mr Shaw's position becomes still feebler. That comes of preferring an Ecumenical Council to "a handful of raw Rationalists" ; or, more correctly, preferring one somewhat ancient Rationalist (Samuel Butler) to a thousand.

But when we go on to consider the future of the Life-Force, which justifies Mr Shaw in calling it God, the polite critic is embarrassed. No doubt, judging by progress in the past and the pace of progress to-day, man will become superman ; but the archangelic intelligence and the omniscience are the wildest of fancies. Barring cosmic accident, men should find this globe habitable still for millions of years, and will advance to a degree of intelligence, refinement, and social order of which we have no conception. But the last term is quite clear in science. Life will be frozen off the surface of this planet, and the line of advance will be broken, to begin again on some other globe. Still worse is Mr Shaw's idea that, if man chokes the spirit of progress by his prejudices and indolence, the Life-Force will make its ascent through some other branch of the animal world, and supersede

man. "Something may come out of a bush," I have heard him say—"a super-snake or something"—and stride beyond man. This is a serious deduction from his philosophy; and a final *reductio ad absurdum* of it. So reckless a feat of imagination shows only how far he is from a knowledge of the facts of life on which he speculates.

I think it is important to investigate in this way the ultimate foundation of Shaw's beliefs and denials, because we shall now see that his philosophy of life, in the human sense, is directly built on it. You find it, in the end, supporting nearly every one of his constructive proposals. Let us see how he proceeds, in his approach to human problems.

What is the aim of life? By what test shall we know if we are making progress? Leaving out of account the older religious standards, modern thought generally says: The spread of happiness on earth, the lessening of misery and suffering, is the proper aim of man, and he must measure his progress by his advance in that direction. Shaw stands almost alone among Socialist writers in denying this. Happiness for yourself is a low ideal: happiness for others a false ideal. "Look life straight in the face," he says in "The Sanity of Art," "and see in it, not the fulfilment of a moral law or of the deductions of reason, but the satisfaction of a passion in us of which we can give no rational account whatever." The mysticism of the idea is baffling, and we get little assistance from his authoritative biographer, who thus defines his position: "Life is realised only as activity that satisfies the will: that is, as self-assertion. Every extension or intensification of activity is an increase of life. Quality and quantity of activity measure the value of life."

One would say, at first, that Shaw, like every other

thinker, merely makes a universal standard of his personal taste. The Stoic thinks the aim of life is for all to be virtuous : the Epicurean, for all to be happy : the Catholic, for all to be orthodox and proper : the artist, for all to have refined sentiments : and so on. Shaw likes work, and so says the aim of life is for all to be active. One might very well submit to him that the same Life-Force has inspired these other apostles with their various and contradictory life-aims, and one has no proof that its message is correct in his own case alone. His "divine spark" (as he sometimes calls it) tells him to be ascetic and hard-working : mine tells me to be epicurean, whenever possible, and hard-working : and my friend's vital force impels him to be epicurean and idle. Clearly, the subjective standard fails altogether. I like Browning's gospel of work, but want to know what I must work for. We must study the effects of our activity. In his earlier "Quintessence of Ibsenism" Shaw had said : "Conduct must justify itself by its effect upon happiness, and not by its conformity to any rule or ideal." It seems a pity that Shaw discarded that fine maxim in favour of a mysticism that few can understand and still less accept. I do not say that he then adopted utilitarian morality : it was rather utilitarian immorality. But at least it was intelligible.

The last word I have heard him say is that "we must develop our spiritual powers." No doubt he means our intelligence, will, taste, and finer sentiment. Materialists are just as eager to develop these as spiritualists—it really does not matter twopence what their nature is, seeing that we *can* develop them—but an age like ours receives no commands without reasons for them. The assurance that the cosmic will or purpose, as formulated in Mr Shaw's mind,

demands it, will hardly suffice. In fact, Mr Shaw is happily inconsistent. He has really been working all his life to reduce squalor, suffering, and ignorance, and promote happiness. Remember the fine speech of the "mad" priest (the representative of Shaw) in "John Bull's Other Island":

" This world, sir, is very clearly a place of torment and penance, a place where the fool flourishes and the good and wise are hated and persecuted, a place where men and women torture one another in the name of love; where children are scourged and enslaved in the name of parental duty and education; where the weak in body are poisoned and mutilated in the name of healing, and the weak in character are put to the horrible torture of imprisonment, not for hours, but for years, in the name of justice."

That is Shaw's great indictment of our age: it causes so much suffering. That indictment rings with the throb of scorn through the whole of his work, proclaiming to the world every year of his life his deep and passionate hatred of all that causes pain, revealing that intensely human heart which some have foolishly denied. His whole life has been a noble struggle against what he believed to be injustice, brutality, stupidity, and all that causes remediable suffering. He is as vulgar a utilitarian as John Stuart Mill or Robert Owen. But his ascetic temper and, especially, his pedantic philosophy have concealed him from himself.

I have said that, although he is a utilitarian, he is not a utilitarian moralist, but a utilitarian immoralist. This brings us to the next article of his creed: the duty of the individual. His reply is that a man or a woman must ignore duty altogether. In the "Quintessence of Ibsenism" he first clearly

formulated this. Most people have rejected the notion of a man's duty to God, with the priest as assessor ; they must now reject the notion of a man's duty to his neighbour, with society as assessor, and at the most recognise a man's duty to himself, assessed by himself. "The golden rule is that there is no golden rule." The Superman is "going to empty out a good deal of respectable morality like so much dirty water and replace it by new and strange customs, shedding old obligations and accepting new and heavier ones." Man is God—the Life-Force. His will is the cosmic will and the standard of action. The man who asserts his will is heroic, approaches the Superman. We have not abandoned the old God to bow to Society. Written codes must go, and there is no moral authority over a man ; even parents and teachers must not dictate to children.

As Shaw unfolded this horrid-sounding dream of moral anarchy, people shrugged their shoulders and said that it was borrowed from Nietzsche. "Whenever," he says, "my view strikes the critics as being at all outside the range of, say, an ordinary suburban churchwarden, they conclude that I am echoing Schopenhauer, Ibsen, Nietzsche, Strindberg, Tolstoi, or some other heresiarch in nothern or eastern Europe." Shaw borrowed nothing of Nietzsche, at least. In fact, it is curious how their language coincides at times when we remember that Nietzsche based his system essentially on Darwinism, which Shaw despises. But he had not even heard of Nietzsche when he wrote the "Quintessence of Ibsenism." It was in the old Zetetical Society days, when he heard Captain Wilson and Stuart Glennie, and talked with Belfort Bax, that he became a moral rebel. This moral rebellion was strengthened by Butler and Ibsen, and based on

Shaw's philosophy. It is very important to understand it aright, as it is misconceived by enemies and put in practice by emancipated admirers. It will be remembered that a criminal once pleaded Shaw's philosophy in court. I have myself been told by young men, after giving a very plain lecture on the ethic of Goethe's "Faust": "I don't believe in your sex-morality. I follow Bernard Shaw."

His biographers usually observe, almost apologetically, that Shaw is really on the side of the angels. "Nothing in the whole world is so far from Shaw as moral indifferentism," says Julius Bab; but ordinary moral rules do not meet his moral needs. Dr Henderson remarks that he is "fundamentally an ethicist." As he loathes Ethicists, who are generally Rationalists, this is mis-leading. In the preface to "The Irrational Knot" he says that if the mob can be persuaded to adopt his doctrine of equal incomes "the sluggards who are content to be wealthy without working and the dastards who are content to work without being wealthy, together with all the pseudo-moralists and ethicists and cowardice-mongers generally, would be exterminated without shrift." One may say that a man who does not practise what he preaches exposes himself to misunderstanding. Has Shaw not always been a pattern of all the virtues, except those "seven deadly virtues" which he recommends to others? That is just the paradox. He has been entirely faithful to his philosophy, yet has been a model citizen, a living rebuke to suburban churchwardens; nay, he has bored and irritated many of us ethicists by his saintly example and his frowns at our tobacco, our beer, and our beef.

The truth is that he is so naturally and unshakably virtuous that he does not appreciate the need of moral

rules. He smiles, as an archangel would, at the decalogue: or as Ruskin or Pater would smile at rules of grammar or style. He then notices that the current moral rules are made the pretext or excuse for a vast amount of cruelty. Children are tortured into compliance with them by stupid teachers and parents: clergymen and other professionally pious people stoop to lying and hypocrisy: women who transgress them are driven to suicide or murder: and a very large amount of really brutal conduct is condoned because it does not fall literally under the ban of the commandments. After Ibsen, Shaw is the most acute and penetrating observer of this side of life. He further notices that these moral rules are ancient formulæ, tinged with ancient superstitions and tabus, not growing with the growth of man's mind and social life. And, finally, he feels that the life-spirit in himself dictates a nobler conduct than these rules engender in his neighbours, and he places his rebellion on a philosophic basis. Scorn rules: assert your own will.

The academic element in this position need not be considered at length. Shaw is an anarchist by temperament and experience: a man who does not need discipline and rules, and smiles at their effect on others. This agrees with the philosophy into which his rejection of Christianity on the one hand and of Rationalism on the other has driven him. Trust the life-spirit in you. Moral rules, moreover, are intellectual summaries, and will, not intellect, is the supreme reality. At the best, moral rules are the formulation of some other person's will (say, the will of Christ), and the Life-Force has moved on since the days of ancient Judæa. Recent versions of moral rules are due to the "Rationalist-Mercantilist," or utilitarian,

theory of life, which he rejects altogether, as a theory : we shall see that he comes back to it in detail. There is no need to add to the criticisms I have already passed on this philosophy. I need only point out again the utter unsoundness of his psychology. He does not follow his own " will," but his judgment. Ibsen, into whom he reads his own bad psychology is clear enough about this. It is only when the intellect dictates your course that you pit your will against that of society (like Dr Stockmann in "An Enemy of the People"). Reason takes precedence. We do not say that it is the superior or more fundamental thing ; any more than man is superior to woman. It happens to be reason's function to formulate conduct, and the will's to achieve it.

From this confusion we get Shaw's mistaken view of the nature of moral principles. He says in "The Sanity of Art," for instance : "Abstract principles of conduct break down in practice because kindness and truth and justice are not duties founded on abstract principles external to man, but human passions which have, in their time, conflicted with higher passions as well as with lower ones." Kindness is a sentiment, of course, and there is a passion for truth and justice. Kindness is, in fact, often a natural quality apart altogether from reason : as in the ladies who are kind to professional tramps and beggars. But the bulk of us are not naturally kind, especially in Mr Shaw's estimate of us, and we have to be reasoned into a cultivation of our scanty native endowment. Truthfulness and justice, on the other hand, are abstract principles, rules of social conduct. If they were merely subjective feelings, present in one and absent from another, Shaw would have no right to attempt to impose his taste on others. When he talks to

the people who sweat labour, or own brothels or squalid houses, or manufacture cannon, they have a right, on his own theory, to shrug their shoulders and tell him that tastes differ. The Life-Force tells Rudyard Kipling one thing, Gabriele d'Annunzio another, and Shaw another. Why is Shaw's version of its will infallible? You are forced to consult reason and objective standards.

Indeed Shaw, like Ibsen, does consult objective tests, and turns utilitarian. Why should a man not lie if he is so disposed? Because, says Shaw ("Quintessence of Ibsenism") "the liar's punishment is that he cannot believe anyone else." Add that he will find it very inconvenient to be known as a liar, since no one can believe *him*, and you have the utilitarian principle in its perfection. There are vices which, like poisons, are medicinal in small doses and pernicious in the lump. In defending his "Arms and the Man" against critics who have called his heroine a minx and a liar, he says, rejecting their moral categories: "I have nothing to do with that: the only moral question for me is, does she do good or harm?" As a matter of fact, she saves a man's life. It is the utilitarian principle making an exception of the rule. Remember how Charles Reade makes his heroine, for a good purpose, "lie with the sweetness of a Madonna"; and how that other would-be anti-utilitarian, Maeterlinck, makes a woman yield to a man's desire in order to save a city—and the only objection our precious dramatic censor saw to it was that she did it in her nightdress!

Shaw is constantly admitting this test, and certainly J. S. Mill would have supported him in claiming that utility, in the highest sense, demands exceptions to, or even the abolition of, some of the conventional

rules of morality. A final quotation, from the preface to "The Irrational Knot," will suffice to close the subject. Shaw says: "To all writers of the first order these rules, and the need for them produced by the moral and intellectual incompetence of the ordinary human animal, are no more invariably beneficial and respectable than the sunlight which ripens the wheat in Sussex and leaves the desert deadly in Sahara, making the cheeks of the ploughman's child rosy in the morning and striking the ploughman brainsick or dead in the afternoon." Quite so: morality must be tested by the utilitarian principle as well as immorality. In point of fact, all this defiance is really related only to one line of the moral code—sex-morality—and we shall see in the next chapter that utilitarianism is not rigid on that point. When you put aside his confused psychology and mystic philosophy, Shaw turns out to be a utilitarian.

This is further seen when nervous people point out to him the probable consequences, individual and social, of young people adopting his theory of moral anarchy. He does not say: "Damn the consequences." He says that your fears are groundless. When you press him into this corner, you find that, in spite of all his withering indictments of our generation, he believes that "a really evil" man or woman is as rare as a genius. Men steal, and women prostitute themselves, from economic pressure. He is more optimistic than many of us "cowardice-mongers," for we know that (as Mrs Gallichan has shown in her "Truth about Woman") prostitution is not generally due to economic pressure, or theft to poverty. There may be "temporary excesses," he admits, if the principle of following one's own impulses were generally adopted, but the emancipated young lady

will generally find, to her surprise, that "the indispensable qualification for a wicked life is not freedom, but wickedness." In the various cases that have come under my own observation the emancipated young lady has easily found the "wickedness," but has paid a heavy price for it; as we shall presently find Shaw saying.

In his "Sanity of Art" Shaw deals at some length with this point. Incidentally, let me notice how the whole controversy is almost always narrowed down to an attack on rules of sex-morality. We will give this point special consideration later, but must take it here as a general consideration of morality and duty. He has two not very consistent lines of defence. At one point he urges that, in plain English, young people will burn their fingers by playing with fire and learn wisdom. "At the best," he says to the would-be rebel, "you will find that your passions, if you really and honestly let them all loose impartially, will discipline you with a severity which your conventional friends, abandoning themselves to the mechanical routine of fashion, could not stand for a day." "Plenty of young women have tried the experiment," he says, and in a few years they found themselves "plunged into duties, responsibilities, and sacrifices from which they were glad to retreat to the life of an ordinary respectable woman." He almost holds the fear of hell over them. At least he talks just the utilitarian-morality language which Goethe and Swinburne talked in their sober old age. The utilitarian would merely ask: If this is experience, why not formulate the gist of it in moral rules and impart it to the young in time—with explanations? And Shaw quite agrees. Laws are necessary, a set of rules is "an overwhelming convenience," because so few have the leisure or

ability to formulate their own standards. We must take them as rules of etiquette, choosing the best available, as one chooses a typewriter.

But Shaw seems to reflect afterwards that, in saying that mankind will learn sobriety by its headaches, and so prompting the obvious suggestion that it would be better to learn it by the headaches of other people (which is the essence of morality), he is getting far away from his philosophy. He returns to his belief in the goodness of man. It is a fiction that we are bursting with a set of diabolical impulses known as "passions." "The ingrained habit of thinking of the propensities of which we are ashamed as 'our passions,' and our shame of them and our propensities to noble conduct as a negative and inhibitory department called generally our conscience, leads us to conclude that to accept the guidance of our passions is to plunge recklessly into the insupportable tedium of what is called a life of pleasure." It is a pity that we have to differ from Shaw in his rare moments of appreciation of us, but his last phrase gives him away. He is judging the mass by his own ascetic and sober temperament. He only succeeds in getting back to his philosophy by a sophistication of life. If he could some Saturday night constrain himself to explore London—dip into a few hundred pubs and music-halls and slums and dark open spaces, and so on—he would speak differently. In any case, his ethic is clear. If you have no passions, follow them. If you are an ascetic, follow your impulses: if you are a voluptuary, follow them at your miserable peril. The chief defect of this rule of conduct seems to me that it is too ascetic. An intermediate position, with self-discipline or morality, seems happier.

I conclude that Shaw has weakened the whole structure of his ideas by giving it a very disputable scientific foundation. He has adopted a position which no one without a wide command of biological science can even discuss, which is now almost deserted by biologists as the science advances in knowledge, and which cannot derive the least real support from pre-scientific speculations like those of Schopenhauer. His position is utterly indefensible when he pits himself against the whole scientific world on a scientific issue such as natural selection, of which he knows very little. He further worsens it by relying on a psychological confusion to attack rationalism, while really attempting to justify by reason every opinion he expresses. He is thus led into confusion and inconsistency in stating the fundamental principle of his practical creed, his ethic, fiercely assailing utilitarianism and constantly falling back on it. Hence the paradox and contradiction of much of his teaching. It is not due to "Celtic brilliance," or the license of genius, or an impatience of pedantry. It is due to philosophising on life without a knowledge of the facts, to pedantry in forcing common-sense opinions into conformity with his supposed philosophy, to obstinacy in adhering to an ancient error, and to the common mistake of framing a general theory on an exceptional temperament. And the confusion is worse confounded by allowing sympathies and antipathies to have a share in shaping his intellectual position.

I have already shown how this unsound philosophy pours into and influences Shaw's most practical and detailed opinions on constructive matters. We have now to see this in connection with the important and engrossing subjects of marriage, sex-morals, women, children, and eugenics. But I should like first to

deal with another general consideration, his persistent scorn of idealists.

Shaw is one of the most ardent idealists of his generation. This is not a paradox, or an assurance that he hides a warm heart under a cynical exterior, or anything of that kind. He is an idealist in the literal and ordinary sense of the word. He flays us because he sees how much better we might be. His Superman is an ideal: his Super-State is an ideal: the Shavian woman, the Shavian artisan, the Shavian municipal nursery—all are ideals. The ideal is merely a conception of a possible better type than the actual. It is utopianism, or the conception of an impossible better type, which Shaw rejects. Yet he never loses an opportunity to have a shy at the idealist. Part of his paradox and whimsicality, we are told. It is nothing of the kind.

It is, naturally, in the "Quintessence of Ibsenism" that he deals most clearly with the subject. He interprets the whole series of Ibsen's plays as attacks on the idealist, and we have nowhere a better instance of that weakness of his strong intelligence which I have already discussed. An ideal, he says, is a mask which we put on an ugly fact. On death we put the mask of immortality: on the family we put the mask of a fictitious harmony and blessedness. Almost immediately he defines the ideal, in very different terms, as "an image of what we would fain have in the place" of the ugly fact, which is the true and ordinary meaning of the word. It is a fiction, of course; and it is perfectly true that we often "idealise" facts (especially the family) by insisting that the reality is already the ideal. This is the source of the whole confusion. An idealist is to him at first the man who puts his mask on reality and says that it is actually fair

to look upon, and he goes on, by a natural but lamentable error, to attack all men who hold ideals before us or themselves.

He makes this clearer by taking marriage. Of a thousand married persons he imagines seven hundred content with their condition, and two hundred and ninety-nine dissatisfied. The malcontents dare not murmur against the sacred institution in face of so solid a majority, and they therefore put a mask on their experience and laud marriage to the skies. These are what he calls idealists. For the moment we need not ask whether unhappily married people really do this. It is enough that this is what Shaw means by idealists: properly, idealisers or optimists. Then comes the one strong man in the thousand, the Ibsen or Shaw or Brieux, who tears the mask from marriage and exposes the facts. He is the Realist; and none are more bitter against him—for some inscrutable reason—than the people whom he would benefit, the idealists. If Shaw always meant by idealists, in his strictures, these men who put a false gloss on reality, there would be no harm done beyond a confusion of words. But he does not; nor does Ibsen. If Peer Gynt, and Julian, and Helmer are all to be called idealists, it is only by a grave confusion. Taking a fiction for a fact is one thing: trying to substitute a fiction or ideal for a fact (say, Socialism for the actual economic order) is a totally different thing. Shaw is too apt to sweep both into the particular rubbish-heap which he calls idealism, especially if the other man's ideals differ from his. Every true realist (in Shaw's sense) is an idealist (in the ordinary sense). He exposes ugly facts only in order to have their ugliness removed, or a better state of things set up, even if he has not himself a conception of what will

be substituted. That one idealist differs from another, and that some idealists are fanatical, and that new ideals must arise as the mind of man grows, are not reasons for impugning idealism. It is important to remember this confusion when Shaw butts stormily at "idealists."

But why does he
invent this
confusion?

CHAPTER IV

THE QUESTION OF MARRIAGE

THE eighteenth century questioned the divine right of kings: the nineteenth century questioned the divine right of priests: the twentieth century questions the divine right of moralists. So the epigrammatist might sum up three centuries of rebellion. The divine right of kings has disappeared: the divine right of priests is disappearing. Will the authority of the moralist be placed in the tomb along with that of these more ancient paedagogues? The rebellion against it gathers strength. Ibsen and Björnsson, Hauptmann and Sudermann, D'Annunzio and Galdòs, Brieux and A. France, Shaw and so many others in England, are a formidable general staff, with a large army behind them. In every great city of Europe and America the dramas and novels of these distinguished artists now find ample support. After a century of feverish effort to disentangle morals from theology and re-assure nervous folk, it is claimed that the one depended essentially on the other and must perish with it.

In examining impartially this third revolt, as every serious man and woman will, one soon sees that, as I said, it is in the main a revolt against one only of the ten commandments. The great artists I have enumerated, as well as Zola, Maupassant, Swinburne, Meredith and other earlier artists, do not applaud dishonesty, hypocrisy, injustice, lying, cruelty, or meanness. On

the contrary, they do more than all the bishops in Europe to promote honesty, sincerity, justice, truthfulness, kindness, and honour. A Nietzsche or a Shaw may trumpet sonorous indictments of morality in general, but we take little notice of these. They are *doctrinaire* statements, deductions from metaphysical principles which, when he finds other men indulging in them, Shaw calls "parlour games." He lashes his generation, not because it is moral, but because it professes high principles and does not live them. He tells a man that he has no duty whatever except to himself, and, if the man then proceeds to vivisect, or to sweat the worker, or to exploit a lower race, because he will profit by it, Shaw makes his hair stand on end with the fury of his invectives. The general attack on morality is a feint, so to say, to cover a concentrated attack on a particular point; but as moralists have a way of considering this point (sex-morals) as the ethical citadel, the confusion is not unnatural.

Properly speaking, the attack on the received standard of sex-relations is not an attack on morality. It is a controversy as to whether this standard has a legitimate place in the moral code. Most of us have discarded the idea that morality is an eternal truth, as Plato thought, intued by the human mind, and unalterable. The European moral code has changed considerably in five hundred years, and has had to sacrifice many illusions. Humility was once thought the greatest of virtues: suicide the deadliest of crimes: cruelty to animals a matter of moral indifference. St Augustine and other early authorities would not condemn a man for having a concubine in certain circumstances: the Bishop of London, who probably does not know this, would put him in the

stocks if he had the power. There is room for consideration of the matter, without falling into convulsions of moral indignation.

Now the most characteristic and generally interesting feature of Shaw's revolt, and the one most scantily treated by his biographers, is his position in regard to woman and the family. Here also he touches one of the great themes of our age: one on which, in view of the changes which are proceeding, it is most important to have clear ideas. I therefore make no apology for devoting a special section of this essay to his opinions on problems of marriage and the family.

As contradictory statements may be extracted from Shaw's works on this important subject, it is advisable to put a few of them in their chronological order, exhibiting the development of his opinions. We saw how the experience of his early years would dispose him to criticise the family-arrangement, and how the intellectual environment of his twenties was saturated with moral rebellion. J. S. Mill himself was by no means ethically orthodox in regard to marriage, and the bold example of George Eliot and others encouraged heretics to discuss the subject with freedom. In the Socialist world, also, there is much heterodoxy, especially on the continent. Hence when, in 1890, Shaw penned the first grave statement of his social beliefs (in "The Quintessence of Ibsenism"), he had already come to the conclusion that marriage was "a conventional arrangement, legally enforced." As he more plainly puts it: "When the social organism becomes bent on civilisation, it has to force marriage and family-life on the individual, because it can perpetuate itself in no other way whilst love is still known only in fitful glimpses." It is accord-

ingly decorated with ideals (fictions) for the attraction of the young, and they in turn, after a period of weary disillusion, give the same fallacious representation of it to the children whom they would find it expensive to support indefinitely.

The great theme of the later dramas is already given, and it is related to Shaw's general ethic. He follows Ibsen, as interpreted by himself. The woman must come out of her doll's house, and assert her will. No one has any duty: a duty to oneself, the only imaginable duty, is cancelled because the debtor and creditor are one. "Unless a woman repudiates her womanliness, her duty to her husband, to her children, to society, to the law, to everyone but herself, she cannot emancipate herself." He sketches the actual procedure. Economic pressure, or curiosity—"When one is young," says Charteris, "one marries out of mere curiosity, just to see what it is like"—or tradition disposes the girl to thoughts of marriage. The tender, devoted fluttering about her of the young man before marriage seals her decision, and she marries. Then comes disillusion: the man mysteriously (for she knows nothing of sex-psychology) cools, the domestic atmosphere is acrid and irritating, the sweetest hours are outside the home. For a time she finds consolation in children, but the relations of parents and grown children are, in Shaw's opinion, generally bad. And in the end she idealises marriage for them, and wearily maintains the system. Shaw advises her to rebel against these sermons on duty and self-sacrifice, but is not clear what the alternative is; except that, as I have explained, he plays with Blake's idea of "temporary excesses" leading to moderation.

Then come the Pleasant and Unpleasant Plays, which enforce the same lesson. The women generally

force marriage on the men and then expiate their error in the sacrifices that are demanded of them (as in "Candida") and the irritations of domestic intercourse. Here and there (Sylvia Craven, Vivie Warren, etc.) are suggestions of the self-willed, cool, Ibsenite woman. But on the whole Shaw is anti-feminist, and not disposed to help them out of the domestic mess which he caricatures. He said years afterwards that Belfort Bax (a stern anti-feminist) had taught him to adopt a "homoist attitude"—the name is bad, but the meaning is clear—and shown him how public opinion and legislation were "corrupted by feminist sentiment."

Hence, while volcanic rhetoric about women's wrongs was pouring about him, Shaw kept cool, if not critical. In the preface to the plays he says, after showing that husbands are dull-witted enough, although they are not confined to the home: "The women, who have not even the city to educate them, are much worse; they are positively unfit for civilised intercourse—graceless, ignorant, narrow-minded to a quite appalling degree." He loathes "the beautiful English home"—for which, we boast, there is no word in any other language; just as there are no swear-words in Japanese. "The normal English way of spending an evening," he says, "is to sit in separate families in separate houses, each person silently occupied with a book, a paper, or a game of halma, cut off equally from the blessings of society and of solitude." I may add, as a side-light on his position, that he accuses professional men of "using their highest faculties to belie their real sentiments," and says: "a sin compared to which that of a woman who sells the use of her person for a few hours is too venial to be worth mentioning."

Up to the end of the century, therefore, he condemned marriage unsparingly, quite ignoring sexual moral standards, but recommended no alternative. I remember being puzzled, not knowing his opinions accurately at the time, by hearing him express strong approval during the first representation in London of Brieux's play "Les Hennetons." It mercilessly condemned the French alternative to marriage, the mistress. The key to his position was his personal asceticism. "Sex is a necessary and healthy instinct," he says in the preface to Brieux's plays. It sounds like a concession on the part of a tolerably liberal Puritan divine: it is next door to calling sex a necessary evil. In this Shaw differs from every other moral rebel in Europe. It is, of course, stupid to say that they demand emancipation for the sake of indulgence, but they are moderate Epicureans. Shaw despises Epicureanism, and loathes "voluptuousness" and sensualism. One of the reasons for his attack on marriage is, and always was, that it encourages indulgence. He cannot, he says, imagine two people sleeping together night after night and not being intemperate. "Marriage is popular because it combines the maximum of temptation with the maximum of opportunity." He almost believes in original sin, and is altogether too chaste and sober to legislate about marriage for ordinary mortals.

Hence, as he is also quite indifferent to providing "food for cannon," he refuses to frame theories for voluptuaries. Go and burn your fingers, he says in effect. This transpires quite clearly in his next serious pronouncement, the preface and appendix to "Man and Superman." In the preface he applies his philosophy to woman. The Life-Force seeks a consciousness of itself in the man of genius, and incarnates

its purpose of fertility in woman. What this means for art we will consider later, but it explains why woman is the hunter. Most observers of life would deny that woman is the pursuer to any great extent, but the situation is, as I have previously explained, complex. There is no reason except an idle tradition why woman should not seek or propose marriage as candidly as man. Healthy, sensuous women, and women in economic dependence, chafe under the tradition, and evade it stealthily. There is no need to make their attitude a matter of psychology: it is artificial. It is a plain effect of natural selection checked by convention. We need not bring in a Life-Force to explain it.

But in the "Revolutionist's Handbook" the theory drives Shaw to some remarkable conclusions. He notices the fall of the birth-rate. The cry of "race-suicide" would not have moved him a few years earlier, but he is now a Eugenist. He sees the class in which the Life-Force is best developed bent on frustrating its purpose of fecundity and retarding the appearance of the Superman. I defer for a moment the general question of Malthusianism, and refer to these passages only as illustrations of Shaw's attitude toward sex-pleasure. He has a mighty scorn for the man or woman "in whom the instinct of fertility has faded into a mere itching for pleasure." His only consolation is that "the modern devices for combining pleasure with sterility . . . enable these persons to weed themselves out of the race, a process already vigorously at work." This is, he frankly admits, a process of natural selection, resulting in the survival of "the self-controlled"—really, the ascetic. He even hints that the higher example of the bees and wasps, which delegate these undesirable functions to

a small caste, may yet be adopted in human society !

There are Shavians who will protest against one taking as an organic part of a serious philosophy such occasional remarks as this, but it is, in point of fact, a deduction from Shaw's principles, and it is most material to understand those principles. He combines the most licentious theoretical immorality with an almost patristic disdain of the flesh. When one reads his dark surmises about the conduct of married people, and his scathing censures of the people who would enjoy intercourse for its own sake, without a high redeeming purpose of propagating the race, one imagines an early Christian hermit in the desert. He is in that respect the lineal successor of Tertullian and St Jerome. Nothing is more delicious than the concern of well-meaning but ill-informed ladies at the moral anarchism which they find breaking out at times in Shaw's plays. They imagine him a more dangerous Swinburne (whom he detests), encouraging our wayward youth in the cultivation of the world, the flesh (especially the flesh), and the devil. He, meanwhile, looks on the ways of these respectable married ladies themselves with the disdain of an anchorite. He is too contemptuous of "love" to be concerned about schemes of "free love."

On the other hand, his new zeal for Eugenics forces him to think out his position in regard to marriage more clearly. The present family-arrangement is in the way of the breeding of a better race. A man and woman who might be ideal parents—he cuts the Eugenic knot by suggesting a man of fine physique and a woman of fine mind—might find it quite impossible to live together even for a limited period. Dr Henderson, who skates rapidly over this part of

his subject, says that "there is no evidence to show that he is one whit more Puritanical than George Meredith, who advocates marriages limited to a specified time." I am not sure what "Puritanical" means when it is applied to that genial Epicurean, George Meredith, but Shaw is at once nearer to Puritanism in his opinion of the flesh and nearer to Shelley in his treatment of tradition. Meredith advocates homes and temporary marriages: Shaw regards the home as an abomination and would not, apparently, agree to marriage for a single night. The Superman must be created scientifically. I need hardly say that he is by no means anxious to put an end to all fine sentiment between men and women, but he dissociates it from sexual feeling, which is voluptuous. Marriage must cease to be the rule, and become a mere concession to peculiar people. The Superman may "allow the matrimonio maniacs to continue, but on condition that there is no conjugation"; a condition which seems to imply the sterilisation of the married. Breeding is to be a serious sociological function. . . . One had better refrain from following the idea in detail.

This curt and clear repudiation of marriage on the part of an ascetic and happily married man could not close the subject, and Shaw faced it more resolutely in 1908. The play "Getting Married" is a symposium on marriage. From the complaints and proposals of the quaint group of characters one must not draw conclusions as to Shaw's views, except that the dialogue is plainly intended to decry the home and marriage, but there is the usual hundred-page preface. In this he discusses, with considerable candour, every aspect of the institution.

He begins by stating his intention to stop all this

nonsense of emancipated young people about marriage and free love. He does not know in the least why they have given him a reputation for "advanced ideas." Our actual marriage-law is "inhuman and unreasonable to the point of downright abomination," but free unions, or nominal marriages in which the partners hold themselves free "to sip every flower and change every hour," are worse. Except in the case of people who pretend that they are really married, or of Bohemians who have no position to lose, "an open violation of the marriage laws means either downright ruin or such inconveniences and disablement as a prudent man or woman would get married ten times over rather than face." "Whenever there is question of setting up a joint domestic establishment, involving questions of children or property, marriage is in effect compulsory on all normal people." Where there is not such an intention, "clandestine irregularities are neither dignified nor safe nor comfortable, which at once rules them out for normal decent people."

This is easily understood from what we have already seen. Shaw does not attack free unions on moral grounds, but because they are at the best mere voluptuousness and at the worst dreadful nuisances. Marriage must be reformed, not abolished. The acute attack of Eugenics in 1903, which led him to put Socialism, education, marriage, and all other reforms aside, has abated. He turns upon the defenders of marriage (like Frederic Harrison) in a disconcerting way. They say they fear the license which would follow a relaxation of the marriage-laws. Shaw tells them that he is attacking marriage precisely on account of the license and sensuality it encourages. He robs them of the title of Puritan: barely leaves

them the name of Mrs Grundy. They say that the beautiful English home is threatened. He riddles it with charges: heaps up all the bickering, child-bullying, hypocrisy, social pretence, and thousand and one disorders of the English home. He scourges Dickens and the home idealisers mercilessly. "The people who talk and write as if the highest attainable state is that of a family stewing in love continuously from the cradle to the grave can hardly have given five minutes' serious consideration to so outrageous a proposition." The "love" with which they start the home is a "transient and exhausting" thing, and in later years the situation is only relieved by the husband keeping out of the wife's way, at business, for the greater part of the day and the wife sending the children to school. And if you tell him of homes in which love survives all these trials, he says it is an "enervating happiness" and must be abolished. But this rarely happens. Marriage is breaking under the weight of its own burdens. Why do such countries as France, the moment they shake off clerical control, pass from indissoluble marriage to the opposite extreme? Young people should be informed that "what they call love is an appetite," which will fade as soon as it is satisfied, and they should not be allowed to make vows of fidelity under its transient spell. Then we will have less of this trickery on the part of mothers, slavery on the part of wives, and boorishness on the part of husbands.

But what is the alternative? Even now Shaw will not be quite explicit. The divorce-law must, of course, be reformed; we have at present "the worst civil-marriage law in the world." It gives divorce on the least important ground, adultery. People talk too much about "infidelity" and the extension of

equal right in that respect to women ; a woman may be intolerably miserable with a faithful man and quite happy with an unfaithful husband. Divorce should be as cheap and easy and free as marriage, and then—if his Socialist ideal is simultaneously adopted—there will be no more bachelors and no more prostitutes. Even if one party alone wants divorce, it must be granted. It is no worse for the other party than to have a proposal of marriage rejected. “The one question that should never be put to a petitioner for divorce is, *Why?*” But more than this is needed. What about the surplus women, since one sex outnumbers the other? “There is no way at all out of the present system of condemning the superfluous women to barrenness except by legitimising the children of women who are not married to the father.” What about professional and other women who find it repugnant or trying to share rooms with a man? “Why should the taking of a husband be imposed on these women as the price of their right to maternity? I am quite unable to answer that question.”

His ideal is now plain. The old tradition of a common home in which man, wife, and children will make a pretence of “stewing in love” for thirty or forty years is to him the sorriest fiction. Better make an end of it altogether and live in separate rooms, in large communal residences, with occasional conjugation for the sole purpose of parentage. As, however, this austere prospect does not appeal to most people, and they will not see the abominations which Mr Shaw, observing from the distant desert, says he perceives in their homes, we must have a civil registrar of divorces as well as of marriages. Let the wife or husband, or both, give due notice that they wish to

cancel the contract and open another at any time they will. But this would mainly encourage love as a luxury, not as a serious sociological function, and men and women must be encouraged to abandon the tradition altogether, live their own lives, and provide the State with new citizens by a free choice of eugenic partners. There must be no moral or legal stricture whatever on such intercourse. In the end, when a super-race is bred, capable of enjoying a comedy or a symphony, but incapable of stooping to the enjoyment of a glass of wine or an act of love, there will only be a *Darby and Joan* left here and there to remind men of the beautiful English home. Marriage, dissoluble or indissoluble, will disappear.

Before I examine the grounds of this position more closely, let me forestall an unjust impression which may be given by this account of his views to those who do not know Shaw. To conceive him as a sour or dour or misogynous crank would be as far from the truth as to imagine him eager to usher in a period of license or sensuality. He is a man of the most generous and jolly disposition, happily wedded to a woman of fine character, high and sane intelligence, and charming personality. His home-life is one of genial sentiment and pervasive gaiety, as all witness who have had occasion to enter it. One must always hesitate to identify the words of any character of a drama with the sentiments of the dramatist, but I would quote here, and set against the foregoing extracts, the following passage from "*Getting Married*." In the midst of one of those burlesque scenes with which Shaw relieves the strain of his serious dialogue, Mrs George, a quaint type of woman who embodies a part of Shaw, goes into a trance and says :

“ When you loved me, I gave you the whole sun

and stars to play with. I gave you eternity in a single moment, strength of the mountains in one clasp of your arms, and the volume of all the seas in one impulse of your soul. A moment only: but was it not enough? Were you not paid then for all the rest of your struggle on earth? Must I mend your clothes and sweep your floors as well? Was it not enough? I paid the price without bargaining; I bore the children without flinching; was that a reason for heaping fresh burdens on me? I carried the child in my arms; must I carry the father too? When I opened the gates of paradise, were you blind? was it nothing to you? When all the stars sang in your ears, and all the winds swept you into the heart of heaven, were you deaf? were you dull? was I no more to you than a bone to a dog? Was it not enough? We spent eternity together; and you ask me for a little life-time more."

This fine passage is, of course, an argument for Shaw's ideal of occasional intercourse, instead of co-habitation, but it must make us hesitate to put too prosy a complexion on his eugenic proposal. It must be set against the frigid and often repellent air of many of the remarks he makes in his own name.

Yet Shaw is an ascetic, and this asceticism and his mystic philosophy prevent many from following his ideas. I say ascetic rather than Puritan (which Mr Chesterton prefers), because Puritanism implies a religious and moral disdain or dread of pleasure (even art-pleasure), and of this there is not a particle in Shaw. One might discover a trace of Platonist feeling—the feeling that the body is a very inferior and antagonistic thing to the spirit—but it is a matter of character rather than philosophy. There never was such another ascetic. These anæmic anti-epicureans have often framed most profound and most splendidly

futile systems of thought, but none of them ever before gave the world a rich and sparkling stream of comedies, with interludes of burlesque. The simple fact is, that for sense-pleasure he has, like Epicurus (to whom he is far nearer than to Plato, little as he thinks it), a very restricted range of receptiveness. He can enjoy his vegetarian dinners, he can dress in fine things (without starch), and for music, painting, and sculpture he has an ample and fine appetite. That is far from Puritanism. But he has no vivid pleasure except in luxuries which appeal, not merely to sense, but to intellect, imagination, and artistic feeling ; and, as “ pleasure ” is commonly taken on the sensuous plane, he angrily rejects “ voluptuousness ” and says “ happiness ” is a mean ideal. He will not see that the only occasion on which he may justly impugn the tastes of others is when a man enjoys pleasure to the detriment of his mind, taste, or character. That is the position of all the other great artists who rebel against sex-morals in some measure, but Shaw has an *a priori* principle. Nature gave us a palate for the definite purpose of securing the maintenance of the body : therefore to take advantage of it to enjoy a bottle of wine is abuse. Nature gave us the sex-thrill for the purpose of securing the reproduction of the body : therefore to enjoy it in itself, frustrating its purpose, is abuse. He forgets that nature did not develop the human ear for the enjoyment of symphonies, or the human eye in order to appreciate Rodin ; and that he has not told us why we must renounce the authority of Society and set up that of the Life-Force.

Next to this perverse metaphysic of sensuous pleasure, the chief weakness of Shaw’s position is his exaggeration of the defects of the home. He knows

that he is exaggerating. "The way to get at the merits of a case," he has said, "is not to listen to the fool who imagines himself impartial, but to get it argued with reckless bias for and against." When he gives you, in "Fanny's First Play," the rather brutal spectacle of a refined young lady squaring up like a virago, in a moment of excitement, pinning a young man to the table, and bashing his face with the savagery of a gorilla, he hardly expects you to think that this is, in his opinion, a not uncommon episode of middle-class life. Perhaps this is an extreme and extremely unfortunate example of his method, especially as even the realism of the stage has its limits and the audience is not quite clear whether it is fun or brutality. But a dozen episodes in the same play might be taken: the persistent snarl of Gilbey (which would paralyse any ordinary cheesemonger in three months), the blatant stare at the footman who turns out to be a duke's brother, the rabid vulgarity of Knox asking him whether he is legitimate, and so on. How much finer and more effective is the exquisite conception of the weeping Mrs Knox, who insists that happiness must be internal. One wonders whether this kind of exaggeration does not defeat its own purpose; but that is a question for later consideration. Shaw has to contradict the pretty fictions of domestic novelists like Dickens, and, on his principle of controversy, he passes to the other extreme.

The general question of the efficacy of exaggeration must be deferred. Here we want to know whether Shaw really finds the English home incurably demoralising. There is no doubt, from his essays and prefaces, that he does. He admits that evidence for his generalisations is difficult to gather and delicate to use, but he insists that the relations of parents

to each other and to their children are generally bad, irritating, and prejudicial to character. We must allow for the element of theory in this, but even here we must recognise that Shaw is largely right. An incalculable mischief is done by deliberately encouraging, or not moderating, young people's romantic idea of the feeling which precedes marriage. The source of it, suffusing the whole being, is very largely desire and expectation, and when this is sated there will be reaction. The judicious attitude toward each other comes after, instead of before, the life-contract. That is the first element of the romance of marriage which he assails, and the root of grave evils. Yet novelists and dramatists conspire to maintain the romance, and parents, whose economic condition usually compels them to look forward to "settling" their daughters, dare not disturb it.

On other counts most people will soberly agree that Shaw, even in his essays, heavily exaggerates. Probably most of the middle-class people who laugh at his plays have far more experience of this than a man in Shaw's exceptional position can have, and they are neither so stupid nor so disingenuous as he imagines. It is second-rate artists, rather than the people who marry, who romanticise marriage. Of late years there has been a very free and vigorous discussion, quite outside of Ibsenist circles, of the "lottery" of marriage. It would take a clever statistician to tell us, on the available data—and it is well for writers on both sides to recognise the ridiculously loose character of the data—whether marriage is a failure or no. You may say that the truth lies somewhere between Dickens and Shaw, or that Dickens describes one extreme and Shaw the other, but at least most people will grant that his indictment has grave

foundations. His chief tactical mistake is to confine himself to the middle class and satirise it out of recognition. In all classes the home-life, though it is brightened by hours and days which Shaw ignores, though it is honoured by honest tears when the daughter passes from it to marriage and the child or parent passes into the silence, imposes a strain on character, is, in a lamentable proportion of cases, a focus of irritation, bickering, courtesy, and selfishness, and is often made an excuse for brutality of which the parent or child would not be guilty in relations with strangers.

In his remedy of easy and cheap divorce also Shaw reflects the feeling of most people who are not compelled to take into account a religious doctrine of indissoluble marriage. His scorn of the liberal compromise of enlarging the grounds of divorce is an anticipation of the future and a deduction from the experience of several other civilised nations. Each new ground of divorce liberates some tens of thousands of sufferers, but the radical source of misery—the plain fact that thousands discover that it is impossible to live in such intimate association with dignity and happiness—is left by this liberal compromise to poison the life of the community. As long as this is permitted, the new novel and the new drama will riddle and ridicule the life of the home.

More interesting is Shaw's plea for the freedom of the surplus women and the women (now numerous, and increasing in number) who find it repugnant to their taste or feeling to live intimately with a man. This is not a point for argument with those who accept Christian morals. They shudder and pass on. But in such a city as London, where six out of seven refuse to hear sermons, it is a point for frank consideration. There is, and always has been, a

vast amount of unmarried commerce, and there is much looseness of conception on the point among non-Christian moralists. This is probably one of the reasons why Shaw speaks of ethicists as "cowardice-mongers," though the chief reason is that they do not, as a body, rebuke vivisectors and imperialist misadventures.

The principle which Shaw offers will probably be accepted only by an infinitesimal minority, for two reasons. First, it is a direct conclusion from his Life-Force, which is supposed to arm with supreme authority the will of the individual; secondly, because he would grant liberty only for the purpose of procreation. I have sufficiently discussed both points. One meets people who profess to follow Shaw in the matter, yet do not believe in his Life-Force and do not accept his asceticism. It is, therefore, probable that in this Shaw is merely enforcing the teaching of the utilitarian moralists or, if you like, immoralists. A moral law must not entail misery or privation, unless some grave interest of the community enforces it; any law which departs from this standard is not a moral law. It is on this ground that most of Shaw's artist-colleagues demand greater sexual freedom. The laws of justice, honour, and humanity forbid indiscriminate looseness. But a transcendental ideal like chastity, with no basis in social needs, is on a different footing; and, in cases where no injustice, dishonour of contract, or suffering is entailed, chastity remains an æsthetic standard which some may respect and others not. Shaw puts himself out of joint with the artists and thinkers with whom he is usually associated in this connection by measuring values according to his ascetic temper and mystic philosophy. He rejects the greater part of

the liberty they claim and the ground on which they claim it. It is quite other writers whom the English Puritan should dread on the subject of "free love."

Deferring Eugenics and Malthusianism to the next chapter, and ignoring what the Superman will do with the lingering "matrimoniomaniacs," we may close with a word about Shaw's attitude toward woman. We have found him avowing himself a "homoist," or anti-feminist, with a reference to Belfort Bax. But there is a wide stretch of sentiment between the attitude toward woman of Belfort Bax (in his "Outspoken Essays," for instance) and that of Mr Shaw. Comparatively, Shaw has written very little about woman, and he leaves us to gather his sentiments precariously from his women-characters. I have quoted the passage, written about the end of the last century, in which he describes middle-class women as "graceless, ignorant, narrow-minded to a quite appalling degree." The development of his views does not tend to make him appreciative. He takes the Life-Force and its purposes very seriously, and believes that its "purpose of fecundity" is incarnated in woman; though an unphilosophic observer would surmise that it is even more intensely incarnated in man, who has more pronounced sexual feelings. This speculation redeems woman in some measure, as it justifies what Shaw regards as her habitual pursuit of man; and he would probably grant that the petty fibbing and hypocrisy with which he supposes her to cloak this pursuit are venial results of man's own hypocrisy in maintaining that she must be coy and retiring.

But, as we shall see particularly in the next chapter, this view of woman really embitters Shaw. In the class to which he belongs, the middle class, the women

now fall into two categories: the religious, whose character he may respect but whose prejudices he deplores, and the more or less heretical. In this latter category the practice of Malthusianism is now general, and Shaw is sternly and violently opposed to it. Such women not only rebel against the purposes of the Life-Force ("the will of God"), not only delay the coming of the super-race, but they do this, he says, from voluptuousness, which he detests. We shall presently see the language with which he lashes such women, yet they are the women who, in other respects, are the one class in which he has hope. It is not strange that he has had no personal message to the women of his generation, in spite of the acute urgency of their problems, and made no serious contribution to the psychology of sex. He merely repeats Ibsen's injunction to rebel against duty and sacrifice, and enfeebles the injunction by his explanations and his metaphysic.

When we turn to the dramas we seem at first compelled to abandon this position entirely and regard him as a most penetrating observer and theorist. But even some of his best admirers have not an unqualified estimate of his women. Huneker puts it in his strong American: "While you wonder at the strength of their souls, you do not miss the size of their feet." I do not quote critics of the hostile school, whose language is violent, and cannot here examine his feminine characters in detail. Glance at them as they successively step out of his artistic imagination. Blanche Sartorius—silly, hypocritical, almost brutal: Julia and Sylvia Craven—foolish and blatant; Grace Cuthbertson—the refined and sensible foil to the preceding: Mrs Warren, a coarse and realistic prostitute, and Vivie, an unreal, mechanically-

constructed girl : Raina—romantic and hypocritical : Candida—strong and charming and improbable : Napoleon's lady—wholly admirable because she is Ellen Terry : Mrs Crampton—firm, sane, and real : Gloria Crampton—stiff, mendacious, unlovely : Dolly Crampton—delightful and impossible. And so on. You have every type, precisely limned, real and unreal, but with academic additions to the psychology of most of the real characters. Acute observation no one will question, but the policy of caricature and the belief in the Life-Force moderate the value of it in very many cases.

But it is impossible to do justice here to his dramatic creativeness, and where justice is not done injustice results. Shaw would probably claim to have made a most penetrating analysis of the real motives of women ; he says that what they and the ordinary psychologist call their motives are only excuses. It is true that he is a penetrating observer, but unfortunate that he is also a theorist. The motive-springs in his characters have too often been put there by himself, and then he artlessly calls us to see what he has discovered.

His ideal woman, a Super-woman, is too vague. He does not believe in ideals, and so his idealism has to express itself in unguarded moments. The woman of the future must be free, economically and morally, absolute mistress of herself, of sufficiently strong and developed intelligence to repel all illusions, indifferent to sex-pleasure but submissive to sex-burdens (her one obedience). But what will she be emotionally ? That is the great question, and Shaw evades it. You cannot draw a conclusion from his dramatic types ; they are necessarily varied and conflicting. He would say that he has nothing to do with the future ;

he is not a Bellamy. But people who are unable to trust his Life-Force (which "has gone mad" in us), and feel that the life of to-day is fashioning the life of to-morrow, must have a pattern or ideal to guide them. Some women found it in his *Candida*—and he promptly wrote a farce about the "Candidamaniacs." It is not Mephistophelean laughter, but a philosophy out of accord with reality.

CHAPTER V

PROBLEMS OF THE FAMILY AND THE STATE

ON various occasions we have found the normal development of Mr Shaw's opinions violently dislocated by a recent ardour for Eugenics. We saw how, for a time, even his Socialist zeal was almost absorbed by the new passion: how the progressive moderation of his early anti-feminism was checked by a discovery that middle-class women, of the best type, were sinning against the commands of the Life-Force: how his general philosophy was contorted into some strange conclusions on encountering this new ideal. It is now time to examine his Eugenic theory and proposals. They have come to occupy a commanding place in his mind during the last decade, and the story of their development is interesting and characteristic.

The first announcement of his thoroughgoing adherence to the new reform is in the preface to "Man and Superman." The first appeal of Eugenics to the modern imagination has an impressive, scientific quality. We have discarded natural selection in breeding our most valuable horses, dogs, fowl, fruits, and flowers. We select the breeders or the seeds, and create a new and finer type with a rapidity and economy that make the procedure of nature seem stupid, wasteful, and old-fashioned. Burbank does not throw a handful of seeds on a cultivated plot, and let them struggle for survival. He chooses the

parent-seeds, with excellent result. But the breeding of our most valuable animal, man, we leave to the cruel and wasteful method of nature. We fling a thousand babies, born of haphazard mating, into the civic arena, and tell them to fight it out. Grave writers like B. Kidd say that we *must* do this, because nature does it, and, of course, a "natural law" (at which scientists now smile) is a dreadful thing to ignore. These "laws of nature" have played a remarkable part in modern culture. They are not laws at all, but simple summaries of hitherto observed facts, yet certain philosophers bluffed theologians out of their belief in miracles by parading these "eternal iron laws," and sociologists would bluff us out of our schemes of reform by the use of the same bogey. The Eugenist points out that "artificial selection" is as natural as "natural selection," and much wiser and less costly. Hence the wide disposition to consider schemes of breeding superior humans.

This scientific appeal of Eugenics is hardly noticed by Shaw. A careful consideration of it would not harmonise with his views about science and selection. It is unfortunate that the Eugenic argument which appeals to him is an unsound argument. "The bubble of heredity has been pricked," he says; meaning that science has now rejected the old belief that a modification of the individual brain or body (acquired modification) could be transmitted to offspring. If this were so—if acquired modifications were certainly not inherited, as he says—the education and improvement of each generation would die with it, and the work would have to begin entirely afresh in each generation. All the increased fineness of brain which education might give a man or woman would disappear with that particular body. Hence

it would be far wiser and more economical to breed a slightly better brain and body in each generation ; it is stupid to go on breeding ineducable brains and coarse or ugly bodies. We must prevent the continuance of bad stocks (negative Eugenics), and concentrate on the cultivation of good stocks (positive Eugenics). Then, in a few generations, the teacher and social reformer will have far finer material to handle, and man will rapidly rise toward the super-human stage.

It is, as I said, unfortunate that there is a flaw in this argument. Science has not pricked the bubble of heredity. It is a point of very serious controversy in science to-day whether acquired modifications are or are not transmitted. In England it happens that the majority of biologists and embryologists are on the negative side, and probably Mr Shaw has seen some misleading dogmatic statement on that side. But Sir William Turner, Professor Bastian, and others are on the affirmative side, and on the Continent and in the United States the old view has very formidable champions. It is a grave mistake for certain Eugenists to build on disputed theories of heredity, such as Weismannism or Mendelism (both exceedingly disputed), and it is just this mistake which Shaw has endorsed.

His real reason is his very pessimistic estimate of our generation, and this is worth examining. We saw in an earlier chapter how he appeals to Mr A. B. Walkley to admit that democracy, education, and all the " illusions " of their youth have failed ; and how, in the " Handbook " he adds Socialism, Ethicism, etc., to the illusions, and insists that we are making no progress whatever. It is all " goose-cackle " to talk about progress. He dips into history to prove

it. Was England any better under the Puritans than under Laud? Is republican France, with its Panama and Dreyfus, any better than imperial France was? Is the United States, with its trusts and millionaires, improved? This precious nineteenth century (he says in the preface to "Three Plays by Brieux"), which "regarded itself as the summit of civilisation" and "talked of the past as a cruel gloom that had been dispelled for ever by the railway and the electric telegraph," was stripped of its masks by Marx and Zola and Ibsen and Strindberg, and "revealed itself as, on the whole, perhaps the most villainous page of recorded human history." We are actually degenerating, instead of advancing. Our boasted factory and penal legislation, and housing, and so forth, are merely things that money has done, not outcomes and proofs of character and statesmanship. On the other scale he heaps the Boer War, the mutilation of the Mahdi's body, the expedition to Peking, Denshawi, our jails, our lawyers, our doctors, our teachers, our divines, our *foie gras*, our furs and feathers, and so on. The world is "a den of wild animals" and "will not bear thinking of to those who know what it is."

He warms to the work and goes further into history. Our conduct and codes are no improvement on those of Rome and Athens. Is the modern chauffeur greater than the old chariot-driver, or the modern Prime Minister greater than Cæsar? In the notes to "Cæsar and Cleopatra" he says that "the world presents, on the whole, a rather less dignified appearance in Ibsen's 'Enemy of the People' [a piece of constructive pessimism] than in Plato's Republic" [a piece of wholly imaginary utopianism]. We see no progress in the whole historical period; except

in engineering, which has given us the smoke of London and Sheffield. In short, the command over the forces of nature has not been accompanied by an increased command over self, which he takes as the test of progress. In all the changes which have chequered the history of Europe during the last 2000 years, we have not even got back to the mark reached by the older civilisations. A certain point has been attained in the development of each historical civilisation, and we have not passed it, if we have reached it, in modern times ; and even this point was only "a pinnacle above an abyss of squalor."

Shaw denies that he is a pessimist. When Max Nordau intimidated Europe and America with his pessimistic "Degeneration" in 1895, it was Shaw who made the most spirited defence of the nineteenth century. In the artistic movements which Nordau took to be symptoms of senile decay Shaw saw indications of healthy and vigorous youth. A few years later he penned the scathing indictments of "Man and Superman." This is not pessimism, he says, because he has a firm faith in the future—a confidence in the Life-Force. He is a meliorist. But, whatever we call his mood, there is hardly another distinguished writer in the world to-day who would endorse his estimate of contemporary life. And since this estimate is the direct cause of his stress in Eugenics, and indeed darkens the serious elements of all his recent work, it merits consideration. It is a good opportunity to test his bad opinion of us.

We want a plainer test of progress than "increased command over self," and Shaw would agree to test it by our success in diminishing prejudice, cruelty, injustice, coarseness, and dishonesty. In these respects I would, on behalf of our age, challenge

comparison with any age that has been recorded in the story of man. One is inclined to dismiss Mr Shaw's opinion that we are deteriorating, and that the nineteenth century is "the most villainous page of recorded human history," with one simple remark. If George Bernard Shaw had lived five hundred years ago, he would have been burned at the stake or boiled in oil; if he had lived one hundred years ago, he would have been sent to Botany Bay, or hounded from country to country like Paine, or driven insane (as many were) in an English jail. In our age he is respected throughout Europe and the United States, and can make £10,000 in one year by libelling us in his amusing way. He will not study or reflect what England was only a hundred years ago, or France under Louis XVIII., or the American Colony under the witch-hunting Puritans. London a century ago (we have a detailed account by the head of the police at the time, as well as many serious social studies) had, to a population of one million, far more prostitutes than it has to-day; and it reeked with crime, drunkenness, duelling, coarse and cruel pastimes, dense prejudices, tyranny, political corruption, and squalor to an extent of which our experience gives us no idea. Each point can be amply established. The treatment of child-workers was brutal in the extreme, adult workers were fearfully overstrained and brutalised, the homes of the poor were hovels of inconceivable squalor, women were grossly wronged, and so on. And the abatement of these evils is due solely to humanitarian, and very largely Rationalist, workers, forming and building upon an improved general sentiment. When you compare things, you must know both terms of the comparison. If the Boer War had been a hundred years ago, what would

have been the number and the fate of the Pro-Boers?

In his larger historical comparison Mr Shaw seems to have an imperfect knowledge of ancient civilisations and an imperfect grasp of the course of history. No one but a religious apologist would suggest that medieval Europe was an improvement on ancient Europe, and that the present indicated continuous progress. We have been slowly advancing for seven hundred years, but in the preceding seven hundred Europe had receded enormously. There has not been continuous progress, and in many respects the nineteenth century merely climbed back to the position whence Athens and Rome had been dislodged. But one has only to reflect on the slavery and the hemlock-cup of Athens, and the slavery, the gladiators, and the imperial corruption of Rome, to see that we have now gone far beyond them. Mankind has got into its stride at last. There is no possibility now of barbarism overthrowing civilisation as it formerly did. It is not true that civilisation keeps rising to a point and ebbing again. It reaches a higher water-mark in each great civilisation, and is far above them all to-day, with no sign of receding again.

The actual evils, stupidities, and crimes that linger in our civilisation should be, not merely admitted, but burned into the consciousness of every man and woman. That is the great and enduring work of Shaw. His exaggerations and the feebleness of his historical comparisons do not matter. The serious student of his works must realise these exaggerations and errors, but, when we have set them aside, his indictment of our age rests on very serious evidence. There is no need to go into it here, as it will be apparent

in the study of his dramas. It is well to give a warning, however. Juvenal's famous indictment of Rome is not only less reliable as to fact than many imagine, but it confuses matters of taste and plain defects ; it reviles the age because women have taken to letters, and so on. In the same way, much of Shaw's indictment of our age is based on personal standards or disputable tests. We shall see a few instances presently.

Studying these defects of our age, therefore, and wrongly convinced that we are making no progress, Shaw tells us to abandon education and other remedies, and breed a new race. Most people are now agreed that negative Eugenic proposals are sound, but the positive proposals are vague and meagre, and we look to a fearless thinker like Shaw to improve them. He says that marriage is in the way, and must go. " Being cowards, we defeat natural selection under cover of philanthropy ; being sluggards, we neglect artificial selection under cover of delicacy and morality." Certainly the man who thinks that marriage is in the way and will not say so is a coward ; and there are many. It is probable, Shaw says, that the best children will be born of parents who differ from each other so much that they could not comfortably live together. It is at least not improbable, though we need as yet a closer study of the importance to offspring of real and deep sympathy between the parents.

As to the method of carrying out the reform, Shaw thinks it premature to speculate. It may be done by the State, or by " a private company or a chartered company for the improvement of human live stock." We cannot help feeling some concern, at this vague prospect, lest certain really fine and sound human

sentiments are not in danger of disappearing. However, the more practical question is: What qualities are you going to choose in your breeders? I need not go into the serious difficulties which arise from the great uncertainty of human inheritance, but we do require some suggestion of a "pattern" or "specification." Shaw admits that he has none. "What is really important in man is the part of him that we do not yet understand": which makes breeding difficult. We know what we want, and how to get it, in cattle and sheep. At one point, as I have said, Shaw suggests mating a man of fine physique with a woman of fine mind. But what is a fine mind? An Ibsenite type, or an Epicurean type, or a religious type, or a new type? Imagine even a committee of Fabians—say, Mrs Shaw (rationalist), Mrs Webb (mystic), Mr Shaw (Shavian), Stanton Coit (emotional ethicist), and so on—trying to settle it.

The culmination of Shaw's reflections on this subject admirably shows how his philosophy is no idle speculation, but the most dominant element in his mind. In the interview which was published in the *Labour Leader* (March 31st, 1911) Shaw says that we must trust "the power behind evolution working with the purpose of introducing something better." It is difficult to imagine such a power, and more difficult to credit it with purposes or know them, but we have discussed that. Shaw hints that we have some guidance in the phenomenon which is popularly known as "falling in love." Had this idea not already been published, I should have hesitated to reproduce his remarks on this point at the City Temple in October 1913, although I committed them to writing at the time. He repeated that "falling in love" was an instinctive direction of the "divine spark" within

us, and the safest clue to the problem of breeding the Superman. He enlarged on it at length, and insisted, literally, that when two people spontaneously "fall in love" the Eugenist has his cue. Most of us have seen much "falling in love," on long sea-voyages, holidays, etc., and smiled at the purblind and undiscriminating passion, the flutter over a curl, a curve, or a moustache which superficially adorned a base or feeble character. And Mr Shaw's last word on the most treasured gospel of his later years is to entrust the fortunes of the race to this.

Partly from his zeal for Eugenics and partly from his scorn of voluptuousness, Mr Shaw has taken up a very definite attitude on another actual and important problem of the family: the question of the artificial restriction of births. He began to attack Malthusianism in "*Man and Superman*," one aphorism of which is: "The most revolutionary invention of the XIX century was the artificial sterilisation of marriage." He was already a Eugenist, contemplating with concern the prolific breeding of the unfit and the scanty breeding of the fit; and he saw that the restriction is due largely to a desire of greater comfort, and involves sexual commerce for the sake of pleasure only. He returns to the subject in his preface to "*Three Plays of Brieux*," and combines the language of a St Jerome with the language of a Dr Saleeby.

This new practice has made marriage a "charter of libertinage and slavery," often masking "the coarsest libertinage." By its means "childless marriage became available to male voluptuaries as the cheapest way of keeping a mistress and to female ones as the most convenient and respectable way of being kept in idle luxury by a man." He grudgingly admits that the expectations of better health and

comfort to mother and children "have no doubt been fulfilled in some cases"; a piece of his inevitable exaggeration, as this advantage is bound to arise in almost every case, and is one of the chief reasons for the practice. But it should be freely, defiantly stated that the desire of greater comfort for father, mother, and children is undoubtedly the main consideration. Of this no defence is needed, since few take Shaw's Stoic opinion of sensuous pleasure seriously, and need not until it can be shown that the practice, while beneficial to the individual, is harmful to some higher interest.

Shaw cannot show this by appealing to a "duty to Society," since he recognises no such duty; he cannot plead that national defence is endangered, for he loathes militarism; and he will certainly not plead that the industrial world requires a maintenance of the birth-rate. At one moment he tries a desperate expedient. A man may prevent his wife from becoming a mother, and this would be "a position intolerable to a woman of honour as distinguished from a frank voluptuary." If this is a correct antithesis, "women of honour" must be rare in the intellectual world in which Mr Shaw moves; but the case is not serious. There is no complaint, worth speaking of, against men in that respect; and a reformed divorce-law would soon settle such a case. In the main Shaw falls back on his philosophy. I trust no one will impatiently exclaim that I am constantly dragging in his philosophy. I do not drag it in; it is there, and to study Shaw and ignore it is to gather together a heap of disjointed and contradictory opinions for which you must plead the license of genius or the whimsicality of the humorist.

Malthusianism frustrates the purpose of the Life-

Force, retards the arrival of a super-race, and encourages voluptuousness. The *bourgeois* is a coward and a selfish epicure, practising it in secret and getting "terrified" when Brieux brings it to light on the stage. No doubt there are many who make a foolish secret of a practice which has excellent humanitarian grounds and is now co-extensive with civilisation; there are also many who heartily applaud any effort to bring it to wider notice. However, Mr Shaw seems to think that the *bourgeois*—he lets the *bourgeoise* down rather gently—must be intimidated from doing it, but he leaves us in some doubt as to the manner and the purpose of intimidating him. "Both his pruderies and his terrors must give way before the absolute necessity for re-examining the foundations of our social structure after the shock they have received from the discovery of artificial sterilisation." His case is clearly undeveloped, and is little more than a reiteration of his ascetic standard of life. Many who would applaud his attitude on this point forget that, on his principle, childless married couples must never have intercourse, and all married people must restrict themselves to the actual production of children: a heavy blow at most anti-Malthusians and a code of life for semi-angels.

The next step in Shaw's social creed should be a suggestion of a new relation of the State or municipality to babies. The home is to disappear. He is, unfortunately, inattentive to this, probably feeling that it is a problem of the future. In the "Quintessence of Ibsenism" he incidentally speaks of a time when "the State will not depend on the private nursery." He, no doubt, agrees in a general way with other Socialist writers who advocate municipal nursing or maternity homes, and municipal nurseries.

Professional or trained officials will care for every child. But here there would be question of a lengthy, slow, and experimental evolution, and he wisely refrains from schemes.

To the school he is more attentive. He, as usual, refuses to dangle before the eyes of enthusiasts pretty pictures of the ultimate state of society and its schools. One must gather his opinion, in so far as he has an opinion, from his views on Socialism and marriage. The child is to have its share of the national income allotted at birth, and the municipality must be a guardian or trustee. His views suggest, dimly, large rural colleges all over England, where the youth of the nation will be reared and taught without the friction of the small domestic sphere. This would, however, be an exercise in utopian construction, and Shaw refuses to indulge. He is at least safer in criticism than construction, and he turns on our actual schools with heavy irony. The teachers are mercilessly flayed. "He who can, does: he who cannot, teaches," says John Tanner. In the preface to "Getting Married" he contrasts the excellence of nun-teachers, with whom he seems to be little acquainted, with "our comparatively ruffianly elementary teachers."

One feels that he has in mind little more than the schools of Dublin in the sixties, just as in speaking of science he stops at the eighties. A good deal of his criticism is disarmed by more recent educational practice. It may be true that "feeding a boy on books exclusively is like feeding a man on gin," but there are few modern schools which do it. Manual training, nature-study, visits to museums and civic and other institutions, are now general. Shaw, of course, wants more. "The schoolboy who uses his

Homer to throw at his fellow's head makes perhaps the safest and most rational use of him." In the case of that particular book, or any classic, many teachers would agree, but one fears that Shaw means any book in school use. He says, more plainly : " What we call education and culture is for the most part nothing but the substitution of reading for experience, of literature for life, of the obsolete fictitious for the contemporary real," and in another place : " The world shown us in books, whether the books be confessed epics or professed gospels, or in codes, or in political orations, or in philosophical systems, is not the main world at all ; it is only the self-consciousness of certain abnormal people who have the specific artistic talent and temperament." There is, at all events, very little self-consciousness in the writers of school-books, and it is difficult to see how the child is to learn history, letters, geography, and most of the things a child should learn, without books. But the general sentiment, that education should make a much more varied appeal to the child's mind than the printed page, is entirely sound and has been admirably realised in modern schools.

The most violent of Shaw's aphorisms about education refer to moral training. " Do not give your children moral and religious instruction," he says, " unless you are quite sure they will not take it seriously." In fact : " The vilest abortionist is he who attempts to mould a child's character." More than one recent social writer agrees that at least direct moral instruction is not desirable, but Mr Shaw is relying on general principles which few would accept. He is misled, in the first place, by dogmatic Eugenists like Karl Pearson, who advocate a new sort of Calvinism in which " zygotes " take the place

of grace and the devil. They say that in the germ of the child there are from the start the "zygotes" of good and of bad qualities, and all the education in the world will not alter them. This is not only a mischievous substitution of a disputed theory for the accepted teaching of science, but it is done in defiance of fact. Experience and history amply show the power of ideas (gospels, social idealisms, etc.) to alter character. But Mr Shaw, with his antipathy to culture, has a peculiar way of reading history, and, as he is not more closely acquainted with science, he is easily caught by some cheap scientific dogmatism which suits his views.

His general theory of morality compels him to resent the moral training of children. He conceives what people call their moral code as an expression of the will of the ancient Hebrew priests, or of a more recent Hebrew prophet, or of Society ; and he resents the enforcing of any such will on the individual's will. We have already seen that he makes certain admissions which should have modified his view. He warns young folk that they will burn their fingers if they play with fire ; he warns the liar that he will find lying unprofitable in the end ; and so on. In this he affects an indifference to the moral aspect of these things, but he is really playing the moralist, or preaching "Rationalist-Mercantilist" morality.

When the new conception of morals spread in the nineteenth century, moralists were eager to prove that there was something of the thunder of Jehovah in conscience still : something of the awful mystery of the summit of Sinai. They invented "categorical imperatives," and "moral intuitions," and "will of Society," and all sorts of bogies. Mill enthusiastically said that he would burn in hell for all eternity rather

than tell a lie at the supposed bidding of the Almighty. I would not : assuming that I preferred the company of such an Almighty for all eternity. All this early melodrama is disappearing. Moral law is not a command of Society. It is a summary of the experience of the men and women who have constituted Society for thousands of years. "Thou shalt not lie"—I omit police laws like "Thou shalt not steal"—means: "Lie if you like, but you'll pay for it." In its finest and most serious conception moral law means that, since you live in a social body and breathe its atmosphere, you will be wise to avoid doing to others what you do not wish them to do to you. Christ formulated the utilitarian principle; and then spoiled it by telling a man to love his neighbour as himself, which no man ever did or ever will do, except for a heavenly reward.

If, then, moral law is only a record of human experience during ten thousand years of civilisation, it is the most essential part of the training of children to impart it to them, without thunder and lightning. The child is a natural thief, liar, and brawler: to speak of children in real life, not in pretty stories. It is not original sin, but original innocence. To scold or bully children for these things, until they have been made to understand them, is stupid; and merely to tell them that they must not do them, or that someone said a few thousand years ago that they must not, leaves their mental mechanism in a very unsatisfactory condition. So far Shaw is fully justified. But it is difficult to see why a child should in all cases be allowed to learn by experience that fire burns or intemperance makes you sick. If the child is an unyielding sceptic (which is a very good thing), it must try the experiment; but most children can be

induced to take your reasonable assurance that fire burns. You could make a complete and reasonable moral code from the exigencies of life in the playground.

Some men and women remain children, or retain the dominant impulses of children, throughout life, and make the core of our criminal class. Our treatment of these is regarded by Shaw as one of the greatest sins of our civilisation. In the preface to "Major Barbara," especially, he inveighs against imprisonment. "When a man wants to murder a tiger," he says, "he calls it sport; when the tiger wants to murder him he calls it ferocity. The distinction between Crime and Justice is no greater." He makes his meaning plainer by supposing that a burglar has stolen his wife's diamonds. "I am expected," he says, "to steal ten years of his life, torturing him all the time." He knows, of course, that the vindictive idea of the punishment of criminals has been abandoned. They are not now "punished" for their sins against society, except by some of the more stupid and reactionary of our judges (like the one who recently sentenced a young man to four months' imprisonment for being vulgar in his attacks on religion). They are treated with severity in the hope that people may be deterred from crime by fear of the consequences. He will not accept this as justification: "The net result suggested by the police statistics is that we inflict atrocious injuries on the burglars we catch in order to make the rest take effectual precautions against detection; so that, instead of saving our wives' diamonds from burglary, we only greatly decrease our chances of ever getting them back, and increase our chances of being shot by the robber if we are unlucky enough to disturb him at his work."

The prison-question is one of the most perplexing of the many problems which humanitarian sentiment forces on us: one of the hundred controversies—let it be said incidentally—which redeem our age from Mr Shaw's vituperation and lift our civilisation beyond any other that ever existed. There has been an enormous advance toward humanity in the treatment of prisoners during the last hundred years. Even judges are becoming human. I recently saw a judge hand to the jurymen at the end of the day permits to inspect the jail, saying: "Gentlemen, go and see the place to which you send criminals." But the way to proceed is far from clear. Lombroso admitted, shortly before his death, that the comparative humanisation of the penal system has led to an increase of crime. No doubt a persistent determination to use the medicinal principle as far as possible and to discriminate between isolated outbreaks and habitual maladies will eventually find a way. We ask, however, what suggestions Mr Shaw has to make, since his language implies that we are sinning against a plain duty.

He is evidently as much embarrassed as any of us, for he simply throws out one of those fantastic suggestions which no one can consider seriously. One might as well advocate the practice of Erewhon, where the prosecution was directed against the man who suffered himself to be swindled or burgled. At one moment Mr Shaw presses "humane and hygienic measures," regarding crime as we regard chicken-pox. Economic reform and serious education will, no doubt, diminish the amount of crime, but it is surely apparent by this time that we have in every community a body of abnormal men and women who would rather steal than work, or who have, in general,

criminal impulses which are dangerously strong. Shaw says: "It would be far more sensible to put up with their vices, as we put up with their illnesses, until they give more trouble than they are worth, at which point we should, with many apologies and professions of sympathy, and some generosity in complying with their last wishes, place them in the lethal chamber and get rid of them." Many of us would subscribe cheerfully to the establishment of a municipal lethal chamber, or human dust-destructor. The sound part of the community has to bear an intolerable burden of physical, mental, and moral incurables. But it is precisely the treatment of curable criminals and the discrimination of incurables on which we want guidance. Shaw's proposal is not serious. He is an expert in the art of vituperation, and thinks we should be content with his valuable services in that very necessary department.

He is often compared to Nietzsche, or said to have borrowed from Nietzsche. His treatment of crime illustrates at once his approach to and departure from the German moral anarchist. Nietzsche has had no influence whatever on him, and the coincidence of their opinions at times should not mislead us. The man who fancies that Shaw must have borrowed his anti-moral ideas from Nietzsche must be strangely ignorant of the wide spread of such ideas in Europe. Where they seem to coincide is in their apparent rejection, on principle, of *all* moral principles. We saw, however, that Shaw really respects every virtue except chastity (which is one of his most conspicuous personal adornments), and that the philosophic basis of his rebellion is quite different from that of Nietzsche. This is easily seen on taking any special problem. Shaw does not advocate the whip for our women-folk,

and is not only not opposed to humanitarianism, but is full of the most vehement and boisterous tenderness for animals as well as men. Nietzsche would have used stronger language about Shaw's ascetic, vegetarian, anti-sport, anti-militarist, and generally anæmic Superman than about the Archbishop of Canterbury. Shaw, on the other hand, says of Nietzsche: "Never was there a deafer, blinder, socially and politically inept academician" ("Dramatic Opinions," review of "Nietzsche *contra* Wagner"). Nietzsche was so full of perverse admiration of the process of natural selection that he glorified the criminal; Shaw would tread him out of existence, like a beetle, and does not even believe in natural selection.

It would be impossible, and is unnecessary, to run over all the particular social problems on which Shaw has touched. I have selected those on which he has expressed himself with some fulness, presumably after serious reflection. One must not press the extreme tendrils of his social reasoning. He is opposed to futurism in sociology, and, if he allows his soaring imagination to reach out to a constructive idea at times, he may express it as a wild and stimulating suggestion rather than a reasoned proposition. His gift is criticism, and we ought not to undervalue it. It is an absurd mistake to say that any man can criticise, but few construct. On the contrary, few have the penetration, candour, fearlessness, and indifference to respectability which are needed for useful criticism. The real weakness of Shaw is that, quite apart from his deliberate policy of exaggeration, he has microscopic (not normal) vision for our faults and is blind to our virtues; and he is too fond of comparing us with earlier generations with which he is very scantily acquainted.

There is just one other question of a moral or social nature which should be discussed here, since he has dealt with it so often and so forcibly. I mean the question of vivisection. His scorn of us for our sport (humane sport), our beer, our tobacco, our beef, our musical comedies, our starched shirts, and our semi-detached villas, is too much a matter of taste to be discussed here; while his opposition to militarism, vaccination, and other disputed institutions has no distinctive element. But the question of vivisection has always had a very important place in his mind. Our toleration of vivisection is, to him, one of the typical symptoms of our brutality or denseness, and his brooding over it has carried him to strange lengths.

He began (as far as his current works are concerned) to attack vivisection in the *Saturday Review* in 1896. From that point he has gone on to denounce Darwinians, Rationalists, and other "cowardice-mongers" for supporting it—though they do not support it in any higher proportion than other men—until, in the lengthy preface to "The Doctor's Dilemma," he has raked the whole medical profession with a broadside of invective. An examination of the points of this preface will suffice for our purpose.

He opens with a general fusilade on the profession, which is "a murderous absurdity." The surgeon has not greater personal honour than other men, yet we trust his discretion entirely in the matter of operations; he even allows rich people to tempt him to cut out their appendage, so that they may pose as martyrs, and he does not tell them how "the anæsthetic" has to be paid for by weeks of illness. The medical men are "no more scientific than tailors," and they encourage "imaginary invalids," and go on injecting superfluous drugs for the sake of payment.

Bacteriology, with its "frenzy about microbes," has only increased our burden and the doctor's guile. Inoculation is merely another device of theirs to fleece us. The question of vaccination has "nothing to do with science," and is not affected by statistics. The fact is that the medical men conspire to maintain it in their own interest.

To this heated, impetuous, and comprehensive impeachment a doctor would, if he could keep cool, reply that no doubt there is the same proportion of men of inferior character in the medical as in other professions, but he would like something more definite than Mr Shaw's assurance before he admits the high proportion of villainy which Shaw suggests. The mere outsider will be apt to say that Mr Shaw's remarks on anæsthetics, which have spared an incalculable amount of suffering and saved myriads of lives, do not dispose us to listen to him. In the end Shaw gives high praise to medical men for their well-known devotion, relief of the poor, and so on; which leaves us in considerable uncertainty as to whether virtue or vice is more common in the profession. The doctors and surgeons who are in touch with the surplus funds of the wealthy are a very small proportion of the whole.

Then he begins his chief dissertation on vivisection. Why the profession as a whole supports it is "a mystery." There are a few prominent medical men who "bring a rush of despairing patients to their doors by professing in letters to the newspapers to have learnt from vivisection how to cure certain diseases." *Very* few; and he might have added the medical press quickly exposes them if their claim is not sound. The majority have no interest in vivisection, but have motives for defending it. The first motive is much the same as that of the Zulu

medicine-man. "The wickedness and stupidities of our medicine-men are rooted in superstitions that have no more to do with science than the traditional ceremony of christening an ironclad has to do with the effectiveness of an ironclad." They mystify us merely in order to keep us in awe of their art. How Mr Shaw, with no knowledge of physiology or pathology, penetrated the secret he does not tell us.

The second and higher motive is the desire of knowledge. But he cannot leave so fairly respectable a motive as this without adulteration, and therefore, as all human beings are cruel, he suggests that the "curiosity" of the vivisector is far from pure. Once, at an Anti-Vivisection meeting, he found himself surrounded by men who hunted foxes and women who wore furs and feathers, and he had the bad taste to talk to them about cruelty to animals (without anaesthetics, one may add). Hence, he says, "those who accuse vivisectors of indulging the well-known passion for cruelty under the cloak of research are putting forward a strictly scientific psychological hypothesis, which is also simple, human, obvious, and probable." I know no more appalling instance of controversial injustice. It would be as fair to suggest that, in his scarification of the poor middle-class, Shaw is "indulging the well-known passion for cruelty." When the doctors plead that they use anaesthetics, we must not be too ready to believe them. "It is hardly to be expected that a man who does not hesitate to vivisect for the sake of science will hesitate to lie about it afterwards." Such excesses restrict Shaw's usefulness, and permit us to take his other indictments of professions or classes with discretion.

There are two serious points in the controversy about vivisection. The first is: Has the practice of

vivisection promoted the skill of the surgeon or doctor and benefited mankind? Shaw disdains to discuss this, because his answer to the second question overrules it. The second question is: Are men justified in deriving advantage from the sufferings of animals? To this he thunders a negative reply. One can hardly help reflecting that if we have no duties to our fellow-men, we can scarcely recognise duties to rats and dogs; but we need not take advantage of his academic professions. The passion which seethes in this indictment, the wish to see men rid of the last shade of cruelty, commands our admiration. But in his heat he states the problem unfairly. There are really three questions. Are scientific men justified in causing pain to animals out of mere curiosity, if any do? To that the answer is obvious. Are scientific men justified in experimenting on animals, for the advance of medical science, when the animals are rendered unconscious? Most people will find it possible to answer that. But are scientific men justified in experimenting on animals, for the advancement of medicine or surgery, when they must cause pain? Opinions will differ, though there may be detestation of cruelty on both sides. An important element of the problem is the fact that a rat's or a dog's consciousness of pain is as far removed from a man's as a rat's or a dog's intelligence is removed from that of a man. That is a truism, never noticed by Mr Shaw, who thinks that the vivisector might operate on men. In any case, his confused, heated, and unjust indictment does not help the judicious inquirer. "Compassion is the fellow-feeling of the unsound," he says in "The Revolutionist's Handbook." We need not go so far as that either.

In the end he returns to the profession. The advance of sanitation, etc., have reduced disease, and the doctors have stolen the credit for it. They take advantage of the stupidity of the public, and keep up a fiction of their infallibility. And so on. He advocates the gradual municipalisation of the profession. "Until the medical profession becomes a body of men trained and paid by the country to keep the country in health it will remain what it is at present: a conspiracy to exploit popular credulity and human suffering." This (the latter phrase) is said seriously, not by way of playful exaggeration. Private practitioners would not be abolished, but for a time stimulate by their competition the municipal Health Officers. The reasonable and discussable suggestions are lost in a torrent of angry rhetoric and too facile generalisation.

These opinions, and the general principles in which they find inspiration, are the serious framework of Shaw's dramas. Nothing is further from his mind than the entertainment, as an entertainment, of the British public. The next chapter, which deals with his conception of art, will make this clear. Those, therefore, who would pay serious attention to Shaw and his work need to consider these opinions closely. He does not wish to take a place in his generation merely for the brilliance of his dramatic construction, the wit and epigram of his dialogue, or any merely artistic features, in the ordinary sense. The artist who is content with such triumphs is, in his opinion, the brother of the prostitute. He is an apostle. I have therefore presented and commented upon his gospel at length, and now need only describe his idea of the artist's function before we approach the long series of his dramatic works.

CHAPTER VI

THE FUNCTION OF ART

THROUGHOUT the long examination of Shaw's personal utterances, as distinguished from the more or less impersonal utterances of his characters, which we have now made, we have found him defying morality with the vigour of a rejuvenated Faust, yet lashing the immorality of his generation with the fervour of a Savonarola. He derides Ethicists for their ethics, and then flays them for their weakness of character. He sweeps idealists from his path and then gives us pages of ardent idealism. This apparent paradox is even more striking when we have to classify him as an artist. Gabriele d'Annunzio is, perhaps, the nearest of living artists to him in rebellion against moral codes; but Shaw despairs so much the work of that "princely artist, of magnificent sensuality" that he never mentions him. Tolstoi was, in his ethical expressions, farther removed from Shaw than any other artist in Europe, yet he would probably claim the closest kinship with Tolstoi.

I have sufficiently explained this apparent paradox. It is partly due to his tactical exaggerations, and partly to the artificiality of his first principles. As he has not the least fear that the average *bourgeois* will take him seriously and follow his own impulses, which Shaw constantly describes as beastly, he feels safe in declaring a general war on morals, duties, ideals, and codes of behaviour. It is the trumpet to

call the crowd ; and it is also an academic conclusion from his principles. When the crowd gathers, he explains that he wishes to impose on them a burden of duties, reforms, sacrifices, and discipline which would ruin a monastic body. The Life-Force scorns their written moral codes ; and then the Life-Force produces from its own bosom a portentous enlargement of the same moral code which outrages the personal liberty of the suburban churchwarden. We are therefore quite prepared for a stringent conception of the function of art. "Happiness and Beauty are by-products. Folly is the direct pursuit of Happiness and Beauty." So Shaw comes to scorn the musical comedy idea of art, and approaches the grim figure of Leo Tolstoi.

We have seen Shaw's early initiation to art. His boyhood years were spent in an atmosphere vibrant with music, and his leisure hours in the picture-gallery. Reaching London, he feasts on greater music and greater pictures, and devotes himself heroically to literary art. In 1885 William Archer secured for him the place of picture critic on the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Except that he joined in the defence of the new Impressionist School, which seemed to him to be "the outcome of heightened attention and quickened consciousness on the part of the artists," his work does not call for examination. He soon learned that freshness, opposition, and apparent flippancy were needed to attract. "The critic adds the privileges of the court-jester to those of the confessor. . . . It was as *Punch* that I emerged from obscurity. All I had to do was to open my normal eyes, and with my utmost literary skill put the case exactly as it struck me, or describe the thing exactly as I saw it, to be applauded as the most humorously extravagant

paradoxer in London." He was still forging his weapon. But behind all the light play he felt that he must have a firm grip of facts. He has always been much deeper in art than in philosophy. Style, as an æsthetic quality, he calls "a parlour game." "Effectiveness of assertion is the Alpha and Omega of style."

For three years he visited every exhibition in London, and, as these were the days of his most assiduous lecturing, without fee, he found that the work was very heavy and the reward light. In 1888 Mr T. P. O'Connor founded the *Star*, and the Fabians, who were pervading everything, pervaded it. Shaw became "Corno di Bassetto," the musical critic of the new evening paper, with Clement Shorter, Richard Le Gallienne, and A. B. Walkley as colleagues. The work seemed like "the leisure of a Persian cat after the labour of a cockney cab horse," and it took him to the theatre as well as the concert-room. He now had occasion to make his conception of art precise and firm. In judging painters you cannot speak much of moral purpose: in commenting on operas you confront the issue. It was the period of the Wagner controversy, and Shaw adopted Wagner and found reasons for doing so. But it is better to complete first the outline of his career.

In 1890 he wrote his "Quintessence of Ibsenism," and became known as an enthusiast of the new type of drama. In the same year he took the position of musical critic to the *World*, and wrote criticisms in other papers, such as Henley's *Scot's Observer*. His indifference to traditions and his passion for reality and sincerity gave his criticism a distinctive character, and the Italian opera and the academic musicians were vehemently attacked. In 1894, however, he retired from the staff of the *World*, and in the follow-

ing year he began his lively and well-known period as dramatic critic to the *Saturday Review*. He had already written his first four plays, and in that year he published his "Perfect Wagnerite" and "Sanity of Art." He had now an original and very emphatic conception of the function of art, and the "G. B. S." column of the *Saturday Review* became one of the chief features of the journal.

When he resigned his position on the *Saturday Review* in 1898, he recommended me to ask for it. To my objection that, having just emerged from a very inartistic monastery, I knew nothing about art, he said: "That does not matter in the least." One has only to look over his articles, republished in his "Dramatic Opinions," to see how much it mattered. It became a counsel in critical circles that when you wished to attack "G. B. S." you must be very sure of your case. His conception of art had become a dogma, almost a religious belief, and the dramatic production of Europe during those three years is reviewed with the ease of conviction and a mastery of technique. Popular idols were treated with little courtesy, often with violence—when Hall Caine, for instance, appeared. Irving and Sarah Bernhardt and Rostand were treated like school-children; Sardou, Pinero, Barrie, and nearly all the most appreciated playwrights, were sternly denounced. Shakespeare was dissected and belaboured every few months, and some of the most unpopular dramatists in Europe were pressed on the public.

The root of Shaw's doctrine of art was, of course, his asceticism. If beauty and happiness and entertainment are by-products, every artist is perverse who makes them his chief aim. Art for art's sake is a truism to most artists: to Shaw it is the prostitution

of a great power. "For art's sake alone," he says, "I would not face the toil of writing a single sentence." Incidental entertainment, a sugar-coating to the sociological pill, is an amiable concession to a childlike public, but a comedy without a purpose is a mean thing and a mere depiction of life in drama or tragedy, without a serious thought in the mind of the playwright, is an abuse of the theatre. Moreover, the popular playwright never did depict life. He gave us "stage combinations of Tappertitian romance with the police intelligence." His work was a constant love-story, but never told the true story of love. He made the stage an instrument of sensuousness, a flatterer of romance and illusion, a soporific for the intelligence, a tickler of jaded nerves.

"Artist-philosophers are the only sort of artists I take quite seriously," he said. He enumerated Bunyan, Blake, Hogarth, Turner, Goethe, Shelley, Schopenhauer, Wagner, Ibsen, Morris, Tolstoi, and Nietzsche. As for such popular idols as Shakespeare and Dickens, "in all their fictions there is no leading thought or inspiration for which any man could conceivably risk the spoiling of his hat in a shower, much less his life." It will surprise many to hear Dickens classed as an artist without a high aim, but it is really the romance and artificiality of Dickens which irritate him. Shakespeare I consider later. "Art," he says (in "The Sanity of Art"), "should refine our sense of character and conduct, of justice and sympathy, greatly heightening our self-knowledge, self-control, precision of action, and considerateness, and making us intolerant of baseness, cruelty, injustice, and intellectual superficiality or vulgarity." The moral code has clearly gone out of the window to return through the door.

But there is a deeper root to his conception of art than asceticism of temperament. He applies his metaphysic to the artist, and finds in him the embodiment of a special purpose of the Life-Force. It seeks consciousness of its purpose in the great artist, just as it embodies its fecundity in woman. Hence the different attitude of great and lesser artists toward woman; while the latter are absorbed in the charm of her "illusory beauty," the former instinctively fear her, moved by an antagonistic purpose. When genius and woman meet there is a tragic clash, but high art is produced, contrary to the general opinion, by "people who are free from the otherwise universal dominion of the tyranny of sex," and art is really "the only department in which sex is a superseded and secondary power, with its consciousness so confused and its purpose so perverted, that its ideas are mere fantasy to common men." Such a reflection may naturally arise in defending the art of Tolstoi or Ibsen or Strindberg or Nietzsche, but how far, or how little, is it verified in the general history of art? Mr Shaw, the arch-foe of all academicians, is too fond of basing statements on a theoretical speculation rather than on a patient examination of facts. Great artists rise above their fellows in the informing of their work by an intellectual element, which makes them something more than ministers to the æsthetic or the voluptuary, but they are not generally those types of genius in whom the purpose of the race is most clearly formulated, and not generally antagonistic to woman.

But the list of twelve great artists in two hundred years, which I have already quoted from Shaw, is commentary enough on his attitude. He detests the amorism and feminism of so much art, because

art is to him the supreme power in life, and love and pleasure are things too mean and petty to absorb it. Art must serve greater purposes. Shaw credits himself with "the specific talent of the mountebank," but disdains to use it merely for earning coppers. He must use it to gather a crowd round the barrel from which he preaches social righteousness. So each great artist must use this specific talent, his particular skill in combining sounds or colours or words. In this feeling he set out to review the artists of his time, and of previous times, and at last became himself a creative artist. It is useful to see how he applies his principles to others before we examine his own work.

His criticisms of Shakespeare are amongst the most characteristic and least understood part of his work. A few audacious phrases such as "greater than Shakespeare," which are merely part of his policy of vigorous or exaggerated expression, are isolated from his essays and give a wrong impression. In the main, he defends two propositions. The work of Shakespeare is very uneven, and much of it is thoroughly bad; to the substance of that proposition most serious students of Shakespeare assent. His second theme is that Shakespeare was an inferior artist because he was not a moralist and philosopher; and in that he does not so much oppose the current artistic appreciation of Shakespeare's best work as propose a new and generally rejected standard of judgment.

One can gather from his pages quite an anthology of eulogies of Shakespeare. "Twelfth Night" and "A Midsummer Night's Dream" are "the crown jewels of dramatic poetry," while "no man will ever write a better tragedy than 'Lear.'" "Othello" is

“magnificent,” and “there is no greater tragedy than ‘Macbeth’.” It is the theatre-manager (who “regards art as a quaint and costly ring in the nose of Nature”), and the learned commentator (who looks in Shakespeare for “propositions advanced by an eminent lecturer from the Midlands”) that spoil Shakespeare for us. When you read him, you find that he is “unsurpassed as poet, story-teller, character draughtsman, humorist, and rhetorician.” In a letter to Tchertkoff on Tolstoi’s opinion of Shakespeare (in which he might have smitten Countolatry as well as Bardolatry) he speaks of “his prodigious literary power, his fun, his mimicry, and the endearing qualities which have earned him the title of ‘the gentle Shakespeare.’” In the preface to Brieux he talks of “the great dramatists of the world from Euripides and Aristophanes to Shakespeare and Molière.” In “Dramatic Opinions” he says: “As far as sonority, imagery, wit, humour, energy of imagination, power over language, and a whimsically keen eye for idiosyncrasies can make a dramatist, Shakespeare was the king of dramatists”; which is not far from Bardolatry.

But mingled with these eulogies are more violent criticisms than Voltaire or Tolstoi ever wrote. “Cymbeline,” the much-admired, is “for the most part stagey trash of the lowest melodramatic order, in parts abominably written, throughout intellectually vulgar, and, judged in point of thought by modern intellectual standards, vulgar, foolish, offensive, indecent, and exasperating beyond all tolerance.” Shakespeare “took his characters from the common stockpot of melodramatic plots, so that Hamlet has to be stimulated by the prejudices of a policeman and Macbeth by the cupidities of a bushranger.”

There is not a sentence put in Cæsar's mouth that is "worthy of an average Tammany boss." Strip Shakespeare of his beauty of sound and his "miracles of expression," and you find only "a platitude that even an American professor of ethics would blush to offer to his disciples"—nothing but "canting, snivelling, hypocritical unctuousness." He tells Tchertkoff that he has done his best to open the eyes of England to "the emptiness of Shakespeare's philosophy, to the superficiality and secondhandness of his morality, to his weakness and incoherence as a thinker, to his snobbery, his vulgar prejudices, his ignorance, his disqualifications of all sorts for the philosophic eminence claimed for him." "There are moments," he wrote in the heat of the campaign, in the *Saturday Review*, "when one asks despairingly, why our stage should ever have been cursed with this 'immortal' pilferer of other men's stories and ideas, with his monstrous rhetorical fustian, his unbearable platitudes, his pretentious reduction of the subtlest problems of life to commonplaces against which a Polytechnic debating club would revolt, his incredible unsuggestiveness, his sententious combination of ready reflection with complete intellectual sterility, and his consequent incapacity for getting out of the depth of even the most ignorant audience except when he solemnly says something so transcendently platitudinous that his more humble-minded hearers cannot bring themselves to believe that so great a man really meant to talk like their grandmothers."

That is the indictment. It should be added that the prosecuting counsel admits extenuating circumstances: the influence of a bad education and bad companions. The Elizabethan public wanted patriotic

bombast, blood, romance, elevation of dukes and ridicule of clowns ; and the Elizabethan poets and dramatists give it. Incidentally, one wonders why Shaw forgets this when he argues that there has been no progress ; there is now a large public for Ibsen and Shaw, and a very large public for Pinero, Jones, and Barrie. However, Shakespeare was born into this medieval world and followed its customs and its "ruffianly pedants." He admits (in the preface to "The Admirable Bashville") that Shakespeare was too great to follow them servilely. He adopted their "rigmarole" and made it the vehicle of "a new order of thought." But "the rigmarole could not stand the strain, and Shakespeare's style ended in a chaos of half-shattered old forms, half-emancipated new ones, with occasional bursts of prose-eloquence on the one hand, occasional delicious echoes of the rigmarole, mostly from Calibans and masque personages, on the other, with, alas ! a great deal of filling up with formulary blank verse which had no purpose except to save the author's time and thought."

Allowing for the fact that Shaw deliberately adopts the pleading manner of Sergeant Buzfuz, we have here a serious critical study. Shaw knew Shakespeare well from beginning to end, long before he became a dramatic critic. He admits enough to justify sober Bardolatry, and has a good case against commentators whom the difficulty of finding something new to say has driven into admiration of Shakespeare's depth and subtlety. He does not do justice to what he curtly dismisses as "magic of words" and "command of imagery," for these things are the essence of poetry, and in them Shakespeare is supreme. But he admits them, and adds wit, eloquence, and superb power in telling a story or depicting a character.

His "pilfering" is not a serious fault, for Shaw has admittedly pilfered much. One has a public right to steal a badly told story and tell it well. Many of his other defects are manufactured by judging Shakespeare by "modern intellectual standards," and expecting a man to be superior to snobbery and prejudice in Elizabethan England. A thinker might, to some extent; but Shakespeare was an artist.

There is the gist of the whole controversy. Shaw says that a man cannot be a great artist without being a thinker. Otherwise he is a showman, putting "the human pig" before us very vividly but unable to penetrate the real, internal principles of action. "Description is not philosophy, and comedy neither compromises the author nor reveals him." The controversy is hopeless because it turns on a matter of taste. Should the artist be a moralist or sociologist? A sincere artist like Eden Phillpotts flatly denies it. Art has a function which is not the function of the moralist, and it implies a contempt of art as such to say that it is of no value unless it be used for moralising. It is the eternal battle of the Stoic and the Epicurean, the Puritan and the Cavalier; with the added piquancy that here the Stoic and Puritan is the great denier of duty and idealism. In short, it is a philosophy based on a temperament and must appeal in vain to men of a different temperament. Shaw says that Bunyan and Ibsen were greater artists than Shakespeare, and *in the same sense* undoubtedly regards his art as superior to that of Shakespeare. We can easily admit that Bunyan, Ibsen, and Shaw are greater moralists, yet retain our "worship" of Shakespeare. The only serious points are, first, whether Shaw has not greatly exaggerated in declaring Shakespeare incapable of analysing

motives: and, secondly, whether he has not completely missed the moral evolution, or growth of purpose, which is traceable in Shakespeare's plays.

The exaggeration is in this case more intelligible than usual. Shaw, as a dramatic critic, was waging war on behalf of certain modern artists whom the other critics and the public rejected. There had been a struggle over Whistler; there was a struggle over Wagner and Ibsen; later came Rodin, Strauss, and Brieux, knocking in vain at the doors of the academy. Shaw championed them all, and he had the exquisite pleasure of seeing them triumph. Think of the effect in confirming his philosophy of art! The admirers of Brahms and Shakespeare and Pinero had to admit that their standards were wrong, he said. In any case, while the fight lasted he belaboured their idols with language which to-day looks excessive, and which he has since admitted to be excessive.

His defence of Wagner need not be considered at length. He felt that Wagner was a genius, a supreme artist in his sense of the word, and he contemptuously went for the academicians who complained that his technique was against the rules. The "laws" of art are, like laws of nature or moral laws, summaries of the customary procedure, and Shaw was not the man to see genius enslaved by them. In the course of his campaign, however, he elaborated a deeper theory, which is chiefly set forth in his "*Sanity of Art.*" Nordau had quoted impressionism, Wagnerism, and many other modern artistic movements among the symptoms of European degeneration. The insinuation was, in part, that the anarchy or rebellion against authority which revealed itself in these movements was an indication of disease, of febrility and

madness. An American Anarchist editor, therefore, B. Tucker, invited Shaw to reply in his journal, and the article was afterwards published as "The Sanity of Art."

Ignoring the question of consistency with his general disdain of modern times, Shaw made a more vigorous and effective reply to Nordau than any optimist in Europe. He appeared as a "young European," vindicating the strength and promise of his generation against the *laudator temporis acti*. He acknowledged that each of these pioneering artistic movements had been followed by a wave of weak imitation and discrediting excess, but the movements themselves showed how the spirit of man was gaining strength. In explanation of Wagnerism he pointed out that music might be either merely decorative or dramatic. The first is the ordinary professional idea of music, the music of Brahms and the French and Italian opera: "a graceful symmetrical sound-pattern that exists solely for the sake of its own grace and symmetry." Art for art's sake, in other words, which Shaw disdained. But it was conceivable to use music "to heighten the expression of human emotion," and the distinctive modern movement, corresponding to the new dramatic movement, is the realisation of this aim. Mozart began the reform by a composition of both decorative and dramatic music, and Wagner "completed the emancipation of the dramatic musician from the laws of pattern-designing." Wagner was a "tone-poet," and "wanted his symphonic poems to express emotions and their development." Conventional musicians insisted in judging them by the laws of "sound-patterns," and the public had been trained in a feeling for sound rather than for drama, so that Wagner was

simply regarded as bringing chaos into the musical world.

This was written in 1895, yet it sounds like an answer in advance to the later controversy as to whether Shaw's plays were plays. After so many similar struggles, in which the initial prejudice was generally defeated, Shaw can hardly avoid being encouraged in his view of authority. He returned to the subject in 1898, and wrote "The Perfect Wagnerite." Here he does what he had scolded the Shakespeare commentators for doing; he finds in Wagner "propositions advanced by a learned lecturer from Germany." That Wagner, in the "Ring," is consciously alluding to the religious and social struggles of modern times is clear, but Shaw's minute and Socialistic interpretation of his symbolism reads like a commentary on "Revelations" or "Faust." Probably the romantic element in Wagner, which Shaw should have condemned but does not notice, did more to reconcile the British public than Shaw's defence. It is, however, now ancient history, and he can look back with satisfaction on his champion-
sh
ship of the rights of genius. On the broader issue he can hardly be satisfied. He assailed the "decorative" musicians on the ground that they were the ministers of "voluptuaries," and the voluptuaries now enjoy Wagner as sensuously as they enjoy Gounod, and ignore his gospel, or are ignorant that he has one.

In the preface to his "Dramatic Opinions" Shaw admits that in these old *Saturday Review* articles he was at times unjust and exaggerated. The theatre of his time refused admission to Ibsen, and so he "laid siege to the theatre." He urged that Pinero was "no interpreter of character," but an "adroit

describer of people as the ordinary man sees and judges them." Barrie, he said, had "no eye for character"; he "makes a pretty character as a milliner makes a bonnet, by matching materials." As to Hall Caine, he cruelly asked: "Who is Hall Caine?" By the time he wrote this he had himself put scores of characters on the stage, and critics were complaining that his psychology of character and motive was utterly false and artificial. Instead of basing his theory on facts, he based his facts on theory: a theory of the comprehensive wickedness of mankind. This we shall see later. For the moment we must recall that his harsh judgments on contemporary dramatists were partly due to his championship of Ibsen. Clement Scott and most of the other leading critics talked of Ibsen's obscenity, brutality, dullness, ignorance of art, and defiance of dramatic propriety. Shaw, as usual, belaboured their idols in defence of his own.

His relation to Ibsen is less close than is generally supposed. In the preface to "Major Barbara" he says that he knew nothing about Ibsen "until years after the Shavian *Anschaung* was already unequivocably declared." In point of fact, the first unequivocal declaration of the Shavian philosophy is in "The Quintessence of Ibsenism," for the writing of which he studied the whole series of Ibsen's dramas. At what earlier date he first read Ibsen it is impossible to say, but in 1889, when he was a colleague of Walkley on the *Star*, the "Doll's House" was produced in London, and a furious controversy followed. In the following year he gave for the Fabians the series of lectures on Ibsen which were afterwards collected in the book. There is, therefore, much better reason to connect his name with that of Ibsen than with

those of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, neither of whom he seems to have studied.

But instead of taking his philosophy from Ibsen he reads his own ideas into the Scandinavian dramatist. He analyses the series of plays and learns from them that "the real slavery of to-day is a slavery to ideals of virtue" and that the proper rebellion of to-day is the rebellion against duty. To this conclusion he had himself come in his old Zetetical Society days, but he does some violence to Ibsen in making him a complete Shavian. In Shaw's exposition of the dramas Ibsen attacks the idealist as "a dangerous animal" in each production. We saw that this result is reached by confounding illusions and ideals, and by stressing the evils which result from false or obsolete ideals or from the fanatical sacrifice of others for one's ideals. Ibsen is by no means always attacking some type of idealist. He is pleading for flexibility in one's conception of duty as opposed to the theoretical rigour of conventional laws, for vitality and freshness as opposed to ancient codes. Take the "Doll's House," in which Shaw represents Helmer as an idealist and Nora as a woman who sees through his illusions. It is sheer abuse of words to call Helmer an idealist, and the whole change in Nora is a piece of dramatic fiction resulting from a convergence of incidents which happens only on the stage. It is useful to convey Ibsen's feminist gospel, which is not so much a rebellion against duty as the preaching of a higher duty. Take "An Enemy of the People," in which Shaw sees an attack on political idealism. The only idealist in the play is Dr Stockmann, whom Ibsen assuredly does not attack; while the selfish and miserable crowd whom Stockmann defies are as far from idealism as a gang of pickpockets.

In the end Shaw observes that an act must be judged, according to Ibsen, by its effect upon happiness and not by a pre-existing rule or authority. It is true that he explains this "happiness" as consisting in the fulfilment of one's will, and so makes Ibsen accept "the impulse toward greater freedom as sufficient ground for the repudiation of any customary duty," but this is reading Shawianism into Ibsen. The great work of Ibsen's life was to expose the misery that is caused by narrow and antiquated views and by the failure of most people to conform to their own highest principles. You reduce life to an absurdity if you say that Dr Stockmann in "*An Enemy of the People*" should have yielded to his opponents. Neither Ibsen nor Shaw would approve of a medical man co-operating, for the sake of gain, with a gang of officials and share-holders to maintain a dangerous fraud on the community. But if you applaud Stockmann's defiance on the ground that he is asserting his own will, it is only because his will happens to coincide with principles of honour and idealism. The lower characters are just as true to the principle, in itself, of asserting their own will. Ibsen scourges the world, not for not following its will, but because its will is not sound and moral.

We must make the inevitable exception in the case of the moral control of sex-relations. Here, undoubtedly, Ibsen denies the authority or rigour of the accepted code. Whether he would accept Shaw's version of his idea, that it depends entirely on circumstances whether a woman be chaste or not, may be doubted. He is far nearer to J. S. Mill than to Shaw: he is an evolutionist and utilitarian. Shaw says that Rationalists applaud Ibsen in spite of his individualistic defiance of their ethic. But Mill and many

another Rationalist would agree with Ibsen that there was no rigid law of chastity. I do not mean merely that in such a problem as that proposed by Mæsterlinck, where a woman may save the lives and homes of a whole community by yielding to the hostile commander, she should certainly do so. The fact is that sex-morality is in process of reinterpretation ; it needs to be rid of its transcendental and ascetic elements before any utilitarian can logically accept it. Ibsen was in this a perfectly logical utilitarian, and there is no need whatever to import mysticism into his philosophy. But it would be difficult to name any other supposed moral command against which Ibsen urged or palliated rebellion. We saw, in fact, that Shaw is in the same position. He pitches the whole of ethics out of the window, but reintroduces every part of it except the old conception of chastity. The great battle is very largely a sham fight.

Even in regard to philosophy, therefore, there is a great difference between Shaw and Ibsen, and certainly there is no question of Shaw having taken inspiration from the older dramatist. There is much the same difference in regard to dramatic form. It did not need the example of Ibsen to dispose Shaw to produce dramas with a purpose ; he could not have produced anything else. In the actual production he differs enormously from Ibsen. The great Scandinavian falls in the line of the world's most powerful dramatists ; he lets the incidents and characters convey a message for the reader or spectator to gather. The ribs on which he has put artistic flesh do not stick out, as in Shaw's dramas ; there are no sociological disquisitions or intellectual debates. In fact, Shaw severely blames Ibsen for following the conventional rules of play-writing. "I prefer

my own plays to his in some respects," he says. Ibsen is apt to crown his picture of drab or unhappy life with a murder or a suicide. Shaw thinks the play would be "sadder and more convincing" if those were omitted, because "the tragedy of modern life is that nothing happens, and that the resultant dullness does not kill." In any case, he regards "endings," happy or unhappy, to stories as conventional, and will not have them. Ibsen might say that art is not photography, and that, if you would compress a life or a tragedy into a three hours' performance, you must use conventions.

The fundamental difference between the dramas of Ibsen and Shaw is that Ibsen's are almost totally devoid of conscious humour, while Shaw's would never have found a wide public but for their wit and fun and epigram. To the general public Shaw's plays are comedies; Ibsen's are very grim tragedies. Shaw's gospel can be overlooked, and no doubt generally is overlooked. Press and public classify his dramas, as they appear, as dull or Shavian, and their fate is determined. I sat recently on a platform from which Dr Brandes lectured, with Shaw in the chair. Eighty per cent. of the crowded audience had come to hear a witty speech from Mr Shaw, and then listen with painful resignation and perplexity to a learned dissertation on Nietzsche; and the press, next day, gave a verbatim report of Mr Shaw's speech and condensed Dr Brandes into a few lines. Ibsen commands attention by his dramatic qualities alone. I am not, of course, contending that tragedy is superior to comedy, but showing that there is hardly a parallel between the two artists.

The last European dramatist whose cause in England Shaw has espoused is Brieux, who is much

closer to himself. Shaw declares him to be the greatest dramatist in Europe ("west of Russia"—Tolstoi was then alive) since the death of Ibsen, and "incomparably the greatest writer France has produced since Voltaire." Such an estimate is, of course, inspired by his peculiar conception of art. Not the presentment of life on the stage or in fiction, but the interpretation of life, is "the highest function that man can perform." It is now admitted, even in France, that Brieux is an able dramatist, but Shaw is not judging him on artistic standards. He applauds him as "a ruthless revealer of hidden truths and a mighty destroyer of idols." Brieux is less patently propagandist than Shaw, and dramatically less conventional than Ibsen. But he puts on the stage scenes and characters which suggest problems (marriage, Malthusianism, etc.) to the audience, and he is almost as merciless as Shaw in depicting the middle-class home. Here is the mess you are in, he seems to say: find your way out of it. To do this with the technical skill of the dramatist is Shaw's conception of great art.

I therefore bring to a close this lengthy analysis of his ideas, and approach his dramas. They are not merely pervaded by his philosophy, but, as we now see, it is his conviction that they *must* embody his views. Archer once greatly annoyed him by contending that he was an artist on the ground that an artist is "a purveyor of pleasure." Whether his dramas or comedies have done much more than purvey pleasure cannot be examined here, but they cannot be understood unless it is realised that he despises such a conception of art. His supreme function is to tell the English people what he thinks of them. He pretends that his view is valuable because he has

normal eyes, but it is more helpful to notice that he has an abnormal temperament and an abnormal philosophy. In the artist it is the temperament that sees, not the eye; and when, the temperament is encouraged by being elevated into a philosophy, the artist is apt to be very emphatic. This is what Shaw has done. He has the rare temperament of an ascetic rebel, a painfully moral immoralist, an anæmic artist, a most orderly anarchist. He differs from everybody, and, while proclaiming the supremacy of the individual will, would erect his own standard of life into a moral code of the most stringent nature for his fellows. He justifies this by imagining a Life-Force which only attains clear consciousness in the man of genius. So he formulates its commands and purposes—becomes a moral legislator (for you must *not* follow your will if it differs from his)—and soundly rates his fellows for not living up to them. That is “the Shavian *Anschauung*.”

CHAPTER VII

PLAYS, PLEASANT AND UNPLEASANT

SHAW has told the story of his dramaturgic beginning with a candour which has pleased his critics. In 1885, the year in which he turned from the writing of futile novels to the criticism of paintings, he and William Archer conceived a grandiose idea of a new and very much plainer "Rheingold." They were both Socialists and Wagnerites. Why not use the dramatic art of Wagner to draw attention to specific social problems? The two young men probably found many things when they began to collaborate, but it is enough that they found they had not the art of a Wagner. Two acts were written, and were laid aside. From pictures Shaw wandered to music, and from music to drama. Meantime he had become keenly interested in the Independent Theatre Society, which was putting on the stage in London plays which the ordinary manager would not produce: plays which were too correct artistically or too incorrect morally—people were a little confused—for the general public. These plays, in which Shaw naturally took the deepest interest, ran for several years without any English playwright contributing to the repertory. So in 1892 Shaw announced that he would redeem the honour of the United Kingdom, and he looked up the dusty manuscript of his Socialist drama.

Critics declare, in effect, that the genuine drama is born, not made. The dramatic artist must be im-

peled by his nature, or native art, to produce a drama. He must supply his own wants, not the wants of circumstances. From that day to this, therefore, there has been a heated discussion of the question: Are Shaw's plays plays? They have, in cases, been described by competent critics as dramatic masterpieces; and they have been described by equally competent critics as clever intellectual constructions which, as Cyril Maude says, show how the author would have succeeded in any other walk of life. Perhaps Shaw himself gives the best answer. In the "Induction" to "Fanny's First Play" the critic implores her not to claim that such things are plays. "No, they are not plays," she laughs, as if she were soothing a child; and she plainly means: "Not in your sense of the word." The remarkable thing is that Shaw did not years ago, or from the start, refuse to call them plays, and flagellate any person who did. If, he might have said, you mean by a play a piece of art for art's sake, or entertainment's sake, or money's sake, please give my work a different name. He did not do this, because he wanted to show how plays should be written and were not.

The discussion of such a question is futile in itself, but it serves to bring out the peculiarities of Shaw's dramatic productions. He frames four principal canons of procedure. First, and above all, the dramatist must have a serious purpose. All round him people were flocking nightly to musical comedies, sensational melodramas, drawing-room plays, and all the other devices for enabling them to enjoy their own emotions for a few hours. Whether or no entertainment has a legitimate place in life, Shaw was not going to provide entertainment alone. The stage must be an improvement on the pulpit. The preacher

points back to ancient Judæa: the dramatist must usher in the dawning light of the new age. "Discernible at first only by the eyes of the man of genius, it must be focussed by him on the speculum of a work of art, and flashed back from that into the eyes of the common man. Nay, the artist himself has no other way of making himself conscious of the ray: it is by a blind instinct that he keeps on building up his masterpieces until their pinnacles catch the glint of the unrisen sun." So he speaks even of his first series of plays. But this first and most imperious canon follows from what we have already seen, and we need not enlarge on it.

— The second canon, which is almost peculiar to Shaw and is the chief cause of the discussion whether he is or is not a dramatist, is that he will appeal to the intellect. A great dramatist appeals to the intellect indirectly, by exhibiting scenes and conduct from which the spectator will draw a moral. An American writer has claimed that Shaw does this, but he has too little belief in the intelligence of playgoers to leave his message implicit. This is particularly apparent in his earlier dramas, but to the very end some of his characters give little lectures to the audience and the dialogue is largely argumentative. One cannot help noticing, in passing, how little consistent all this is with his academic theory of the priority of will and the unimportance of reason. Whenever he has to deal with humanity in the flesh, he appeals to the intellect: the will may be trusted to follow. The chief point is, however, that he is attempting a new form of drama. It would be ridiculous to compare him with ordinary dramatists. He is rather in the line of Aristophanes and Molière, who wrote comedies of character with a purpose.

But his naked intellectualism carries him far ~~a~~way even from these. They aim at provoking sentiment (in the traditional conception of drama) about things which are known to the audience. Shaw aims at convincing them intellectually of things they do not know, or they dispute. The thesis is not hidden. Hamon, in his recent and able analysis of Shaw's plays ("Le Molière du xx^{me} Siècle"), has difficulty at this point. One wonders how Shaw likes his contention that Shaw is an "absolute artist" because he is a "great dispenser of pleasure." So is a prostitute, Shaw would say.

Which brings us to the third canon; that wit and humour and fun and burlesque must be lavishly used to sugar-coat the moral or sociological pill. "By laughter only can you destroy evil without malice, and affirm good fellowship without mawkishness," he says. That is rather what he would call, if he were analysing another person, an excuse masquerading as a motive. He has not been particularly scrupulous to avoid malice in attacking evil, and not been conspicuous for the affirmation of good-fellowship. The truth is that he found by early lecturing experience that the man who can make a crowd laugh gets a crowd. You can tell the general public almost anything if you tickle its ribs in the telling; whether it pays much attention to your serious advice is another matter. To this day large audiences gather to hear Mr Shaw ridicule England and Englishmen. They have heard the joke hundreds of times, but as long as he can put a little variation into it, another little facet on it, they will enjoy it; and they have not the least idea that Shaw can seriously mean what he says when, of the type of men and women whom he would call useful, England produces twenty to each

one born in Scotland, and a hundred to each one born in Ireland. However, the jester was always privileged, and, as Shaw had very unpleasant things to say, he put on the cap and bells, and exploited his humorous vein to the last ounce. He discovered that he was a genius in humour and dedicated it to the service of his god.

— The fourth canon is realism. His antithesis of realism and idealism is wrong. Illusions are not ideals, and a passion for justice is not realism. He is a realist in the sense of the new dramatic school ; you must put slices of life on the stage, not new combinations of old stage-plots and property-characters. It was his chief formal criticism of the existing drama that it did not reflect real life, as it pretended to do. It encouraged people to think that the excuses for their conduct were their real motives ; it omitted altogether the "significant" (the unpleasant and censurable) facts of life ; it created false pathos and ended in a sterile riot of emotion which left no trace after a night's sleep ; it either dealt with characters and scenes remote from the experience of the audience or, if it put the audience themselves on the stage, it represented them as very good fellows. Shaw thought that they were very bad fellows, and it was his duty to tell them so. It was intolerable to have the *bourgeoisie* meeting night after night in darkened chambers to have its senses tickled and its good opinion of itself enhanced. They must be reminded how dreadfully unhappy their homes were, by what shady means they raised the money to go to the theatre, what slums and brothels lay off the track of their wanderings, and so on. Instead of feeding their sensuousness he would let his blows " fall on human noses for the good of human souls."

And this fourth canon of dramatic art, which was to make Shaw the colleague of Ibsen, was his undoing. He has too much imagination for realism. It is one of his peculiar ideas that he prefers photography to painting, but he scarcely ever photographs life in his drama. He is not merely an artist, but an impressionist, and he receives his impression of life on anything but a true mirror. He calls himself a "meliorist," and one wonders whether he does not mean by meliorism simply a belief that the world could be vastly better than it is. J. Huneker says that he dramatises like a vestryman; he sees all the drains that need repairing but does not see the pleasant and good things. It would be strange if it were otherwise in view of his extraordinary isolation in opinions, his peculiarly ascetic estimate of emotion and sensuousness, and his intensely personal standards of living. If he put real life on the stage, people would not be moved. There are not likely to be many owners of slum-property, or shareholders in brothels, or manufacturers of guns, amongst his audience. Let him put the audience themselves on, as they are, and they will not regard themselves as a bad lot on the whole. Shaw is determined that they shall think themselves a bad lot, so he exaggerates and caricatures. He has done what he accuses the "idealists" of doing: he has put a mask on reality, but not a pretty mask.

You see this at once when you compare the opinions of a dozen competent critics in regard to his characters. Are they true to life? You find such an extraordinary diversity of views that you wonder whether the writers are living in isolation from human society. Mr Desmond M'Carthy thinks that Shaw's women are "astonishingly real"; Mr Walkley says that they are detestable automata, with no flesh and blood;

M. Huneker tells us to look at their feet ; M. Hamon says that they are more real than the reality ; Mr A. Symons says that they are clockwork-figures ; Dr Henderson says that they are quite natural in the sense that natural people would act as they do. I need not quote unfriendly critics. His men are similarly disputed. Huneker thinks the Shavian man "a curious combination of blackguard, philosopher, bounder, artist, and comedian" ; M. Hamon thinks his men are correct class-types drawn "à la Holbein" ; and so on. Some hold that he has the keenest eye for idiosyncrasies in real character since Shakespeare ; some hold that he is the greatest caricaturist since Molière.

But one generally finds that the defender of Shaw's realism in character presently makes some reserve or other. M. Hamon, for instance, the most patient analyist, if somewhat obsessed by the comparison with Molière, admits in the end that Shaw's characters do not properly correspond to real people. Shaw professes to have improved on nature by laying bare in his characters the real motives of action, which are concealed in actual life. The truth is that he has imputed motives, to a very large extent, which do not exist. There are a few cases in which he has scored over his critics. When he introduced a very unromantic soldier in "Arms and the Man," and the critics raged, he proved that he had a fairly large literature of military biography to support him. Such cases are exceptional ; the soldier is one of the most natural characters in the world to attract a romantic estimate. As a rule, he imputes mean motives more freely than we find them in real life, or intellectual motives (especially to women) which are very rare. At one time he improves a character

in order to show us how people ought to think ; at another time he degrades a character in order to convince us how very necessary it is to breed a new race and not waste time tinkering with such inferior stuff. Yet he often puts live and plausible characters on the stage, and any generalisation about his characters is bound to be inaccurate. He *generally* exaggerates, constructs, or enhances ; and he has himself admitted that a good deal of machinery will be found in some of his best characters at the post-mortem examination.

He further departs from his canon of realism, and from ordinary stage-practice, by reducing action, or making it farcical and disjointed, and exaggerating dialogue. But a critic would waste his time in discussing how far in such matters Shaw departs from the recognised rules—that is to say, practices—of the theatre. He does not pretend to follow them. He is using the theatre for his own purpose, and the critics and the public may call the performance what they will. In fact, here again it is quite unsafe to generalise. Such a play as “Getting Married” is a debate on marriage set in a slight and fantastic dramatic frame : such a play as “The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet” is an exaggerated melodrama, carrying conventional action to extremes ; and you have all shades between the two. As a rule, it may be said, he relies on conversation and has little artistic feeling for the rest.

He has been severely criticised for his treatment of emotion, and it can hardly be said that in this he is a realist. You may fairly argue that people conceal their motives, but the expression of emotion is usually spontaneous. Shaw’s conception of emotion seems to be more or less that of an explosive : it is either

dead or very much alive. He exaggerates violent emotion, and lets it out on very little provocation ; and he largely ignores normal emotion. It chiefly appears in people losing their tempers. One has to remember that on the stage and in the novel the treatment of emotion is false, romantic, and unctuous to an appalling extent, and Shaw began his work with a fierce hostility to this. Not having a normally emotional character—which does not in the least mean that he has no emotions—he passed to the other extreme. There is plenty of emotion in his plays, but it is not copied from life, and it is too often an emotion at which we are invited to laugh : the middle-class man's sense of outrage when a convention is broken, the middle-class man's bad temper at home, the middle-class man's patriotism, cupidity, and so on.

The weakness is seen most clearly in Shaw's treatment of love. Here lay his greatest grievance against the existing drama. It depicted love-making as persistently as if it were either the most amusing thing in the world or the most serious ; and, according to Shaw, it never gave a true picture of love-making. But he was himself totally unfitted to put love on the stage. He blamed dramatists for making love voluptuous, yet held that it was in reality voluptuous, and ought not to be. He analysed " falling in love " as, partly sensual desire, partly pretence, and partly a result of illusions ; and in the end he recognised in it one of the gravest communications of his Life-Force. His love-making is compounded of malicious observation and metaphysical theory. Nearly all his admirers admit that it is a failure. Imagination is a poor substitute for experience in matters of passion, but intellect is still feebler. The conventional drama is

far nearer to life than he is in passion. In fact, it would be a painful reflection on his Life-Force to take seriously such falling in love as he describes in the great majority of his plays.

But I repeat that there is more risk than profit in generalising about Shaw's plays and characters. The characters he has created are remarkable for their variety, and most of them are individualised with a gift of precise drawing which naturally gives many the illusion of reality. His plots and themes also are remarkable for diversity and range of imagination, and cannot intelligibly be discussed except in detail. It is often said that he intellectually traces the channels along which the sentiment and action must run, but he delights in laying traps for critics who make these general statements. He sometimes adopts every device of the ordinary playwright; sometimes even caricatures his own manner. Beyond the few general features I have indicated, therefore, and a few technical peculiarities (such as his refusal to divide an act into scenes) which need not be discussed, it is unprofitable to deal with his works as a whole, and we may briefly review them.

The origin of the first, "Widowers' Houses," has already been described. It was written to supply a defect in the repertory of Mr Grein and the Independent Theatre; it was intended to be a drama without romance, and with a sociological purpose. The particular theme is, as is well known, the discovery by the sons and daughters of the *bourgeoisie*, who travel in luxury and flirt for occupation, that their comfort and leisure are based on dishonourable profit; in this case, on the ownership of slums. Shaw described it afterwards as a realistic exposure, in dramatic form, of slum-ownership, municipal jobbery, and the callous-

ness of the middle-class in deriving comfortable incomes from such things. His Socialistic admirers loudly applauded the "exposure"; the critics and artistic public loudly condemned the art; and the general public indignantly repudiated the whole business. William Archer, who had co-operated in the earlier (and better) part, said that it proved the power of Shaw's brain and the futility of his dramatic ambition; the characters had whey, instead of blood, in their veins.

That there was far too much theme and far too little art is almost universally acknowledged; Dr Henderson alone sees in it a masterpiece spoiled by social zeal. This was inevitable at the time. The play was in part an election-manifesto, on behalf of the Progressives of the London County Council, and Shaw's dramatic faculty was very immature. It was as offensively propagandist as a temperance-play or an early Christian tragedy written by a clergyman. But there were graver faults than the over-prominence of its social gospel, and these are of greater interest. It is hardly likely that there were any slum-owners in the stalls, and not very likely that there were any in the theatre who were ignorant of the existence of slum-property. What was resented, and is the more serious defect, is that from beginning to end the play was an offensive caricature of the middle-class. To judge from the data in Booth's "Life and Labour in London," such property is so rare—was so rare twenty years ago—that a Sartorius must have been too isolated a type for dramatic representation. Shaw made the moral more comprehensive by depicting the whole of his characters as brutally selfish. All his men are cads, and the one woman, Blanche Sartorius, is rather a beast.

The first act, which holds dramatic promise, is spoiled by the appearance at once of the now familiar Shavian *motifs*: woman pursuing man, ludicrous snobbery, tainted incomes, etc. It is caricature, not realism. The second act is dramatically intolerable: almost devoid of incident, full of prosy didactic speeches, fuller still of the villainy and callousness of the middle class. The third act is not much better. Of wit there is none, as no Shavian hero is introduced; and the humour is slight and infrequent, except for those who would enjoy the caricature. The play was a dramatic failure, quite apart from the prejudices of a London audience. It was withdrawn after the second performance, and no amount of later enthusiasm for Shaw has recalled it to life.

One must read with some reserve Shaw's assurance that he "at once became infamous as a dramatist." He was little known at the time, and the brief incident only gave him a momentary interest as a Socialist who would be a dramatist and could not. Shaw thought differently; and indeed the general verdict was undiscriminating, for there are good features in the play. He at once set to work on another drama, and in the following year (1893) produced "The Philanderers."

In this he completely suspends his purpose of composing sociological drama. He had been accused of imitating Ibsen, and he replied with a caricature of Ibsenism as many young people conceived it and older people dreaded it. He afterwards said that his purpose was to expose "the grotesque sexual compacts made between men and women under marriage laws which represent to some of us a political necessity (especially for other people), to some a divine ordinance, to some a romantic ideal, to some

a domestic profession for women, and to some that worst of blundering abominations, an institution which society has outgrown but not modified, and which 'advanced' individuals are therefore forced to evade." This is scarcely an accurate description, as there is little attack on marriage in the play. It is a play with the not very serious purpose of making fun of women who fancy themselves emancipated Ibsenists and elderly men (including Clement Scott) who regard the spreading cult with horror: a topical light comedy, as the Ibsen controversy was then at its height. The plot is again extremely slender, but the dialogue is greatly improved and has occasional sparkles of the coming wit and paradox. The play exists, in fact, for the sake of the dialogue, and characters of a higher intellectual type are introduced than in the preceding play. Charteris, the philanderer, is a very finished construction, but too obviously a construction: a Shaw with his psychological outfit modified to fit the piece. The Ibsenite sisters, Julia and Sylvia Craven, are crude and fantastic, but the older men are only touched lightly with the brush of Shavian caricature. Grace Cuthbertson, the more or less womanly woman, is the only pleasant figure, the only character with normal good sense.

The play is, in fact, only interesting as an advance in the direction of the amusing dialogue which was to be his later *forte*. There is some fine irony and much acute observation; though this material of observation seems to be used in making characters precisely in the way Shaw had ascribed to Sir J. M. Barrie. But the element of satire and caricature is too heavy. The medical man, Dr Paramore, is loaded with Shaw's disdain of the profession, and the Ibsen Club and all its members are so consistently ridiculed

that admirers of Ibsen thought Shaw had fallen away from the cult. He clearly turned from Ibsen as a distant model to Molière as a distant model, and again missed his aim by lack of restraint and subtlety. The comedy failed as completely as "Widowers' Houses." Grein politely discovered that it was beyond the capacity of his players, and the theatres which were supposed to have actors capable of doing justice to it would not entertain it. It was merely produced in order to secure the theatrical rights, and it remains to this day, in spite of an attempt to revive it, almost unknown on the stage.

Shaw had written five novels in succession despite the disdainful reception of his manuscripts, and two theatrical failures were not likely to daunt him. He returned to the didactic model, and in the same year (1893) completed "Mrs Warren's Profession." Now for the first time he began to hear serious encouragement. Archer thought it impracticable for the stage, but "intellectually and dramatically one of the most remarkable plays of the age," and other critics were now convinced that Shaw was a coming dramatist. The sociological theme did not overshadow the dramatic elements so completely as in "Widowers' Houses," the dialogue was nearer human conversation than in "The Philanderer," and the action was carried at times to the pitch of melodrama. The characters were precise, piquant, and varied, and there were emotional crises of real human interest. Critics chiefly blamed it because even the tragic parts were sometimes marred by bits of levity which bordered on farce, but this could hardly be ascribed to a defect of artistic feeling. Shaw felt the central tragedy of the play keenly enough, but believed that fun should be introduced in and out of season to captivate the

British public. The result is certainly incongruous, and, at times, artistically repellent.

More conservative critics and the public condemned or ignored it on the ground that prostitution and brothel-keeping were not a fit subject for the theatre. On that point one can only say that you are not compelled to go to a theatre, as you are compelled to go to church, and those who dislike the text or its treatment may stay away. It is a more serious defect that the text of the play is unsound. In a reply which Shaw made to some stringent criticisms that were passed on it in the United States he said that his object was to burn in the fact that "you cannot cheapen women in the market for industrial purposes without cheapening them for other purposes as well." It is, however, not a fact that women are generally driven to prostitution by economic conditions ; they take to it, as a rule, because they like it and are blind to the squalid future of so many, or because, like picking pockets, it is easier than disciplined work for eight hours a day. Hence the attack on the conditions of female labour is enfeebled, and the right to assert one's will to prosper in circumstances which are adverse to morality is not sustained. The second act is drowned in argument and speech-making on the subject, starting from this unsound principle. And the second argument of the play, the tainted-money theme, miscarries altogether. Instead of putting on the stage the type of character whom we know from police-proceedings to be involved in these things, Shaw defiantly introduces an English baronet. He weakens his case by such improbabilities.

In the characterisation also he weakens his case, didactically, by his customary excess. M. Hamon contends that Shaw's male characters are correct as

class-types. One may trust that the audiences which have greatly applauded "Mrs Warren's Profession" in many continental cities—it was recently (November 1913) received with great enthusiasm at Venice—do not share this impression. Mrs Warren herself is, as Shaw claims, "a genial and fairly presentable old blackguard of a woman": quite plausible but necessarily an imagined creature. Her daughter, Vivie, is described by Walkley as "an insufferable little Girton prig," and by Huneker as "a chilly, waspish prig." It may be said that the situation in which she is placed, by discovering that her mother has made a lady of her out of brothel-proceeds, would tend to bring out that character in a strong and straight girl. But she is undoubtedly metallic and unlikely. The comparison with Ibsen's Nora, which is sometimes made, is not justified. Nora's complete transformation is not wholly plausible, but she is far more human than Vivie Warren. One can just conceive her as a fine character put in circumstances which are too much for her, and for her creator.

The men-characters are as far from being typical as they could be. There is a baronet who is associated in business with Mrs Warren, and is, even apart from that freak of imagination, the kind of brute who would be tolerated only in the lowest sporting circles; and the other principal male is a clergyman who retains after middle age, in a country vicarage, his youthful taste for drink and looseness. The other male is a stock Shavian character: highly respectable and unintelligent. Shaw is again laughing at the middle class, by means of caricature. You cannot dispute a dramatist's right to do that, but you may very justly protest when he says that such a play is nearer to real life than the plays of Pinero or Barrie.

The play was barred in England on account of its theme, and the Independent Theatre lost hope of finding a representative of the new drama in Shaw. It has been privately performed. Ten years afterwards, when Shaw became popular in the United States, "Mrs Warren's Profession" was presented in New York, and was stopped by the authorities on the ground of immorality. The legal proceedings ended in acquittal, but the press played the censor severely wherever it was performed. In Kansas City the actress who took the part of Mrs Warren was prosecuted for indecency. Shaw made a vigorous defence of it, especially when one of the New York journals which had denounced him was convicted of inserting advertisements of loose houses. Such experiences confirmed his charge of hypocrisy. The play has had a good run at Berlin, Paris, Rome, and other capitals. After the recent first performance at Venice the actors were called before the curtain sixteen times!

Undaunted by the complete failure of the three plays and the defection of Mr Grein, but encouraged by many assurances that he had at last found his dramatic talent, Shaw immediately set to work on a fourth. He now entirely deserted sociology, embraced most of the conventions of dramatic production, and wrote one of his first successful plays, "Arms and the Man" (1894). The serious purpose was an exposure of ideals (illusions) in regard to warfare and soldiers, and it was possible to attain this by a comedy of action and character without any long speeches or argumentative discussion. The scene is placed in Bulgaria, and the mouthpiece of Shaw is a delightfully blunt and prosaic Swiss soldier, Bluntschli, who makes short work of the Bulgarian

maiden's illusions. The musical comedy "The Chocolate Soldier," which was founded on it, has made the plot and characters familiar. The critics who came to criticise made fun of his Bulgaria and his prosy soldier, but Shaw was able to make a very substantial defence. Whether there are many officers' daughters of the age and intelligence of Raina who take their ideas from romantic melodrama, and whether there are many officers in active service as broody and mock-heroic as her lover Saranoff, may be doubted. Bluntschli, the practical, unromantic officer, would be a probable enough figure to most people.

In any case, there were no serious social problems sticking out of the play, and the action ran smoothly and humorously. As the characters were Bulgarians, the British public were quite reconciled to the little hypocrisies, frauds, prejudices, etc., which Shaw ascribed to them. The play passed as an amusing comedy without a moral. Mr Walkley admitted that Shaw had at last written "a play." Shaw referred afterwards to its "much-paragraphed brilliancy," but the general feeling is merely that it is a good comedy, from the playgoer's point of view, weakened in the second act by an intellectual purpose and exaggeration of character to serve that purpose. It ran for twelve weeks, not to crowded houses, in London, and has been fairly popular in the United States, where Richard Mansfield adopted it.

It was so far successful, however, that Shaw now received invitations from theatrical managers. They wanted comedy, but Shaw had no idea of going further in the direction of humouring the public. He had just passed some time at Florence, where the religious art gave a definite direction to his imagination.

“ Religion was alive again ” in England, he considered. His Socialist work brought him into contact with that singular development among the Anglican clergy, the High-Broad-Church-Socialist clergyman ; and the artist catching the rays of the new age (according to his theory, which I have already described) would serve as dramatic antagonist. To the “ clear, bold, sure, sensible, benevolent, salutarily shortsighted Christian Socialist idealism ” he would oppose “ the higher, but vaguer, timider vision and the incoherent, mischievous, and even ridiculous unpracticalness ” of the artist. The Christian Socialist had hardened into dogma : his liberal religion was clearly defined and his social idealism firm. Shaw regarded nothing as final, and would confront the cheerful dogmatist with the vague, disturbing half-vision of something beyond. This was the germ of his famous “ *Candida*. ” It was not built round the figure of *Candida*, but the need to make a refined dramatic conflict of that type intelligible to the general public soon led him to invent her. The dogmatist and the artist should quarrel, not over doctrine, but over a woman ; and the woman must suit the atmosphere. But Shaw fell in love so much with her that the higher conflict is almost lost in the experiences of *Candida*, who knows nothing about it.

The story was necessarily simple. *Candida* is the bustling, cheerful, self-sacrificing wife of the bustling, cheerful, and self-absorbed Rev. James Mavor Morell. It is the domestic life of a very busy, popular, earnest, plausible urban vicarage. Morell breezily acknowledges how everything depends on *Candida*, but has no deep appreciation of the way in which she sacrifices her own personality in the service of him and his

work. They pick up a stray young poet and introduce him into the home. Under their purblind eyes he falls violently in love with Candida, tells his host that she is too good for him, and proposes that she shall be asked to choose between them. A very dramatic conception, but, as the light of the new age does not often break in that form on the poet's mind, somewhat strained. The interest is psychological. You study how the emotional machinery of Morell and Marchbanks and Candida reacts on this singular situation. It is no use criticising Shaw's solution, for he has invented a situation which real people never have to confront; that is, in practice, very often his idea of realism. Candida adopts the conventional solution, for unconventional reasons: Marchbanks goes out into his world of shadows and fitful gleams: Morell learns that there is such a thing as personality as well as ministry. That is the story. Curates and secretaries are thrown in to fill the bill, and there is a very dense and vulgar contractor, Candida's father, who seems to be a symbol of the utter obtuseness of the man in the street to all such finer conflicts. As such Burgess is a failure, because the obtuseness is overdone, and the fun of his vulgarity offends the tense artistic feeling which is aroused. When the poet speaks of "horror" in the deepest artistic sense, it is scarcely amusing to hear the contractor warn him against the results of drinking.

Hamon, one of the best judges, says that this is Shaw's finest play, and he is probably right. All admit that it is one of the finest dramas he has written. Up to the point of the crisis it is a very realistic picture of the kind of life with which it deals, and Morell is drawn to life, without the least caricature. There is little argument, no propagandist elbow

sticking out from the dramatic coat, and no heavy satire of the folly of everyman. As the crisis approaches, the play becomes heavily charged with emotion, and the audience is roused to a keen objective interest. Yet the play was rejected in London, and not presented there until 1904, when American enthusiasm had induced London to reconsider the matter. Probably managers disliked Shaw's relapse from comedy to Ibsenism; probably also the crisis of the play was regarded as too artificial and the solution a paradox. Marchbanks is, in fact, an æsthetic prig, unhealthy and unbalanced, and the only defect in Morell is his toleration of the youth. Candida is a fine and powerful conception, but not clearly consistent. She has marvellous intelligence, yet lets the seething young poet sit at her feet with his head on her knees. She suppresses herself in the service of the parson and his work, yet suddenly astounds us by professing as complete an indifference to moral rules as Mrs Warren:

“Ah, James, how little you understand me, to talk of your confidence in my goodness and purity! I would give them both to poor Eugene as willingly as I would give my shawl to a beggar dying of cold, if there were nothing else to restrain me. Put your trust in my love for you, James, for if that went I should care very little for your sermons—mere phrases that you cheat yourself and others with every day.”

It is not a question whether such a woman is plausible in her environment—a dramatist may go as far away from reality as he chooses, even when he professes realism—but whether she is consistent. Huneker says that all the unhappy wives in New York turned out to hear and applaud that “shawl speech.” The conclusion must have puzzled them.

After a number of very dramatic and impossible scenes between Morell and Marchbanks, the play culminates in Candida coldly choosing between them. She is, of course, not such a fool as to go off with a bundle of ragged nerves like Marchbanks. Her dismissal of him is, however, rather cold-blooded (she cannot see herself at fifty with a husband of thirty-five), and her choice of Morell is put as altruism. She asks herself which of the two needs her most, and decides for the weaker, Morell. Marchbanks goes off, thinking himself mistaken in a woman who can prefer "this greasy fool's paradise," as Shaw afterwards said. Morell and Candida return to their routine.

Shaw's aim is, of course, to commend the woman who is mistress and proprietress of herself, and decry the husband who takes her service for granted. One feels that, dramatically, he has inoculated his dose of Ibsenism into the wrong woman, and not been able to make her consistent. No doubt he wanted to show that an "emancipated" woman is not necessarily a Julia or Sylvia Craven, and may be quite sweet and domesticated. It is a piece of profound or very clever artificial psychology. "It is," Shaw says, "just this freedom from emotional slop, this unerring wisdom on the domestic plane, that makes her so completely mistress of the situation." She is as coldly reasonable as Vivie Warren, yet very obtuse to the condition of the young poet until the purpose of the dramatist is served; she is scornful of duty, yet clings to Morell because he needs her. Yet she is the finest woman Shaw ever conceived, and the whole impossible situation is so charged with dramatic feeling, and so ably elaborated, that the play is, as Archer said, "something very like a masterpiece."

At the time it was still-born. Theatrical managers found it impossible. It was only in 1904, long after it had been published, that New York discovered its greatness, and London grudgingly patronised it. By that time it was better known in Germany, where it was performed to crowded houses and greeted by distinguished critics like George Brandes.

The next play was "The Man of Destiny": a dramatic dialogue between Napoleon Bonaparte and Ellen Terry. It was written for the American actor Richard Mansfield, who did not appreciate it, and it has found very little favour with actors. Too long for a sketch and too restricted for a play, it remains an excellent piece of dramatic literature marred by Shaw's iconoclastic perversity. In order to rebuke hero-worshippers Shaw lets Napoleon trail his long hair in his soup, and he cannot overlook so good an opportunity to rail at England, even if it involves anachronisms. "There is nothing so bad or so good that you will not find Englishmen doing it; but you will never find an Englishman in the wrong. He does everything on principle. He fights you on patriotic principles; he robs you on business principles; he enslaves you on imperial principles." The voice is the voice of G. B. Shaw. The lady, who is said to be built on Ellen Terry, is admirable, and the long dialogue is very skilfully varied.

It was Shaw's first attempt to make history human. The drama and the historical novel generally assume that men and women of other times were so different from us that it is an anachronism not to make them speak a stilted and unnatural language. Shaw, as he so frequently does, went to the opposite extreme. He concluded, on principle and without much historical reading, that man is just the same in a Roman toga

as a medieval uniform or a modern frock-coat. "The man who writes about himself and his own time is the only man who writes about all people and about all time." Hence, as Professor Rogers says, his *Cæsar* and *Napoleon* "are simply on a large scale what we may see any day in a successful ward politician." This exaggeration, however, is more apparent in his later historical plays. *Napoleon* is near enough to our time to be fairly construed in modern terms, and Shaw by no means ignores the historical facts; his chief fault is that he adds to them.

"The Man of Destiny" failed, like nearly all its predecessors, but the memory of "Arms and the Man" still lingered, and the excellence of "Candida" was discussed. Shaw was believed to have dramatic or comedic resources, and managers were interested. Mr Cyril Maude gives us in his "Haymarket Theatre" (pp. 211-6) an amusing, if uncomplimentary, account of Shaw's ways at the time and of the appearance of his next play.

Mr Maude heard in 1895 that Shaw had written a brilliant play ("Candida") and was engaged upon another. He asked to see it. Shaw told him that it would not suit him, but he would write one for the Haymarket: "which," says Mr Maude, "I protest I never asked him to do." He says that Shaw then took a chair for the season in Regent's Park and wrote his next play, under the public eye, in the little pocket-books he used for the purpose. It was finished in 1897, when Shaw amazed the manager by emptying his pockets on to his desk of these little note-books. The play was "You Never Can Tell," and Mr Maude protests that, though he did not like it, he was persuaded by friends to put it in rehearsal. As soon as Shaw came, dressed in a suit which "no

self-respecting carpenter" would wear (probably a good brown Jæger suit), to see the rehearsals, the trouble began. "From the first the author showed the perversity of his disposition and his utter want of practical knowledge of the stage." Actors resigned, and the atmosphere was such that "any author with the slightest decency of feeling would have withdrawn in the face of rebuffs so pointed as these." Shaw placidly continued, and, as the narrative proceeds, he becomes a "demon," a "veritable Svengali," torturing them with his "satanic attitude." The final collapse Mr Maude attributes to their emotion on seeing Shaw appear in a new suit. He withdrew the play, and no other manager would accept it; though years afterwards it had a most successful run in London and elsewhere, appearing on the boards of the Court Theatre no less than 149 times.

In Mr Maude's prejudiced version we have an interesting glimpse of Shaw in mid-career. He was then making a comfortable income, about five hundred pounds a year, by journalism, and his dress and ways must be ascribed to unconventionality. He disdained starched linen and starched manners. His dramatic work was done out of love of the work (mainly in leisure hours, or when travelling), and in order to give the theatre a new standard. People wanted comedy and fashionable dresses, and he would show the way to do this kind of thing. But, he says, "I overdid it" and found on rehearsal that the comedy was impracticable. It was not at all impracticable, as later experience showed, but Shaw was not tactful.

"You Never Can Tell" is one of the most spirited comedies that he has written, though it offends a little by its extremes. Shaw's pessimistic estimate

of the relations of married people to each other and to their children pervades the whole play, yet, on the other hand, the humorous element often rises, or descends, to boisterous fun. The father, Mr Clandon, is a pathetic figure, and his elder daughter has been too obviously fitted up with the Life-Force, and its purpose of fecundity, as a Shavian main-spring. But the brisk movement, a model comedy-waiter and his hilarious lawyer-son, and the quaintest and funniest pair of twins ever imagined, raise the piece repeatedly to the pitch of farce. It is a successful light comedy, with some original characters, but an occasional exhibition of the cloven hoof of Shaw's philosophy.

London would not have the play, and so the first period of Shaw's dramatic productiveness came to a close. Of the seven plays one only had been a slight theatrical success: six were complete failures from the point of view of representation. He had tried drama and tragedy, comedy and farce, sociology and psychology and history, with almost equal unsuccess. In spite of the high praise which some leading critics gave to one or other play, there was something in Shaw which the public did not like. He did not blame the managers. Their business was to cater to "perfectly commonplace people," and he would not do it; their customers did not come to be criticised, and Shaw "made war" on them. It is not the whole explanation, since most of these plays have not been successful even in the later years when other plays of his, with the strongest intellectual bias, drew large audiences. He was not quite honest with himself, and therefore not just to the public. He was really not "substituting natural history for conventional ethics and romantic logic." He was

caricaturing life and pretending that it was realism. To make this tolerable he needed a long training in the use of humour and more concession to dramatic usage.

For the time he despaired of reaching the public through the theatre and resolved to write literary drama. Publishers had been unwilling to bring out his plays. No one read plays; there was too much of the algebra of stage-directions about them, and too little of the life which actors and actresses put into them. At last a publisher was found for the first seven plays, and they were issued under the now well-known title, "*Plays, Pleasant and Unpleasant*." He stretched the terms a little in placing the first three plays in the second category and describing the other four as "*pleasant*." They appeared in 1898, with the lengthy preface which he now proposed to prefix to his plays as "*a first aid to critics*." He declared that, at least as long as the theatre remained purely commercial, he would write plays to be read, and make them intelligible and vivid to readers. From that came his habit of omitting the more technical stage-directions, including miniature-sketches of the characters, and even inserting statements or asking questions about them which had no relation to the stage. These things, however, developed slowly and gradually. In point of fact, he had already written another play which had little chance of being appreciated except on the stage, and with this he opens the little series of "*Plays for Puritans*" and the longer series of his mature productions.

CHAPTER VIII

IN THE LIME-LIGHT

THE next three dramas which Shaw wrote were called by him " Plays for Puritans." By a Puritan he means a man who resents the use of art as " the instrument of a systematic idolatry of sensuousness." He had now spent several years in criticising plays, and one of his most general objections to the existing drama was its incessant pre-occupation with love, or, as he said, with a false and romanticised eroticism. Love was neither so dominating nor so maudlin in real life as it was generally represented to be on the stage, and Shaw would write truer dramas. Critics might have retorted that he had not yet written a play in which the love-theme was not conspicuous, and we may add that he has scarcely yet succeeded in doing this. They were, however, content to reply that he only succeeded in avoiding the usual emotional effect—whether or no it is a naughty encouragement of sensuousness—by making his love-scenes bloodless and unreal. It is a question for lovers to decide. It is at least clear that Shaw did not abandon the love-theme, and, if he made any alteration in his procedure beyond the smoother workmanship which came of experience, it was in approaching nearer to stage-traditions.

In his next play, " The Devil's Disciple," he took an amusing revenge on the critics who scolded him for dramatic heterodoxy. He wrote a melodrama,

combining in it some of the oldest and most sensational incidents of that blood-curdling variety of stage-performance. I would rather say that he was amusing himself than that he was seriously burlesquing the melodrama. At all periods of his career he has enjoyed jokes of this kind, and has probably afterwards enjoyed the penetration of his disciples in finding grave underlying motives. In the preface to the published play he does poke fun at American writers who discovered brilliantly original work in his combination of stock-situations : the hero donning the coat of a wanted man in order to enable him to escape, the heroine falling in love with the scapegrace and vainly attempting to reveal his identity, the reprieve at the foot of the scaffold, and so on. Most of it, after the promising and original first act, was familiar enough.

At the most he might claim that he had humanised melodrama as he had earlier humanised comedy and would later humanise history. His success may be measured by the complete unintelligibility of his hero's conduct to the general public. His hero saves the life, and takes the place, of a minister, who is wanted by the soldiers during the American rebellion. Is it because he loves the minister's wife, who clearly falls in love with him ? The actors felt that this alone would make the play plausible and human, and Dick, on the stage, furtively kissed the heroine's hair while saying that he did not love her. Shaw vehemently resented this : Dick had had no motive whatever. Does the rescuer of a drowning man excogitate a motive ? But there is no analogy between an act which it would be generally regarded as sheer cowardice to omit and an act which it would generally be regarded as sheer folly to do without a motive. The

ordinary romantic melodramatist, in making Dick love the minister's wife, would be nearer to real life.

The play is a conventional red-hot melodrama, full of sensational incidents, involving a large variety of finely-drawn characters. The first act, in a harsh and sour Puritan home of New Hampshire, where the acid religiosity has driven the elder son to the service of the devil, is instinct with truth and dramatic feeling. The second act, in the accused minister's house, fails to impress on account of the lack of motive. The third act, among the military, too plainly introduces Shaw's opinions of military men; he has a plausible mouthpiece in dare-devil Dick. Amusing satire and heavy caricature and fragments of emotional intensity are mingled with something like recklessness. In the tensest crisis of the play, when a moment's delay saves the life of Dick, General Burgoyne flippantly observes: "I should never dream of hanging any gentleman by an American clock." Of serious under-current one can only recognise a plea for the devil as against the sour and hypocritical Puritan, and an intention of ridiculing militarism. But these are incidental rather than essential, and "The Devil's Disciple" must be taken as an extremely able satire of the melodrama, restrained for the most part but freakishly ignoring its own artistic requirements in others.

In "Cæsar and Cleopatra" (1898) Shaw set out to correct Shakespeare and the pundits of historical science. As far as the interpretation of character goes he deliberately challenged comparison with Shakespeare and confidently claimed superiority. Few would claim that Shakespeare gives us a valuable or interesting analysis of Cæsar's character, or deny that he has squeezed the ancient story into the frame

of seventeenth-century drama. Shaw detested the theatrical sublimity of Shakespeare's endings. Nature is not moral, and practises no poetic justice, so that it is not sound art at the close to "cover your eyes with the undertaker's handkerchief, duly onioned with some pathetic phrase." Cæsar must be presented as a human being, and simply pass on to the next chapter of his life, as human beings generally do when the particular episode is ended. Cleopatra also must be described as human. Not only dramatists, and novelists like Sir Rider Haggard, have thought it necessary to give a special and conventional psychic outfit to people of an earlier age, but historical scholars equally fail to humanise their figures.

But Shaw has passed to the other extreme, and met theory by theory. His theory is that human nature is just the same in all climes and all ages, and you must ascribe to Cæsar and Cleopatra such characters as they would bear to-day. His Cæsar is a soldier-statesman who might have been trained at Eton, and his Cleopatra is a bad-tempered little English girl out of one of Mrs Bland's stories. Cæsar soliloquises at tiresome length, *à la* G. B. Shaw, on the loneliness of a superman in such a world as ours: Cleopatra, a pert little girl, invites him to sit on the Sphinx with her, as it is "quite cosy," and is told that she ought to be in bed. The humanising consists, not in substituting for the stilted English of conventional historical drama or novel a speech which will take account of the different shades of character detected by historians, but in simply making the characters talk as English characters would in the circumstances. Sometimes the conception varies, and Cæsar appears as a quaint combination of an ancient Roman and a modern Socialist with some

sense of humour. The suggestion of the development of Cleopatra's character, which the last act introduces, is merely fantastic, and is quite out of accord with the opinions of recent students. But Shaw cares as little about historical scholarship as he does about science. Human nature is always the same ; there has been no progress since the beginning of history. Such an opinion, to be of any value at all, ought to be based on a vast knowledge of history, and we know that it is not. It is one of the Shavian dogmas, and "*Cæsar and Cleopatra*" is an outcome of it.

Hence, though the departure from the unnatural forms and conventions of historical fiction is refreshing, we cannot regard "*Cæsar and Cleopatra*" as a serious historical play. As if he wished to prevent us from doing so, Shaw inserts deliberate anachronisms and very modern jokes whenever his freakish imagination suggests them. Except in scenery and a few other external details, the shock of characters might occur anywhere. Indeed, the chief novelty of the play, the introduction of Cleopatra in her childhood, rather reduces the dramatic quality by making the conflict of characters very unequal. In spite, therefore, of some excellent scenes, of the humanisation of Cæsar, and of the piquancy of the little British-Egyptian princess, the play has not been well received, and it had to wait a number of years for even a moderate appreciation. It is too serious in substance for the lighter public, and too funny and fantastic for the serious. Of its cleverness, within those limits, there can hardly be two opinions.

"*Captain Brassbound's Conversion*" (1899) is the last of the "*Plays for Puritans*." The title which Shaw gave to the three plays, when he published them in 1900, is one of those playful irrelevances of

which he is often guilty. They do not in the least exhibit a design to write serious drama for playgoers who—if there are any—resent the amorousness and sense-stimulation of the ordinary play. Each of the three has, more or less, the nature of caricature ; not caricature of real character, as in the early plays, but of dramatic character. In “Captain Brassbound” Shaw returns to melodrama, and once more luxuriates in the swift movement and sensational incident and sharply-drawn character which delight a music-hall audience. The story is well known. Sir Howard Hallam and his sister-in-law, Lady Cicely Waynflete, wish to visit the interior of Morocco : Captain Brassbound, a thoroughly romantic smuggler, and his crew escort them ; Brassbound is secretly the nephew of Howard, and nurses a deadly grievance ; he plots to deliver the party to a wild Moorish chief, but a convenient American gun-boat rescues them, and the curtain falls on the time-honoured spectacle of justice and reconciliation.

Beyond a slight and incidental fling at British ideals of the administration of justice, the play has no serious purpose. It was, in fact, written for Ellen Terry, who is the model of Lady Cicely Waynflete. Not even here is Shaw serious, for one can hardly imagine Ellen Terry crediting every blackguard she meets with a beautiful face and a really gentlemanly soul, and disarming brigands and sheiks by saying sweetly, “How do you do ?” Perhaps there is a half-purpose of showing, on Tolstoian principles, how gentleness succeeds where justice fails, but, as the effect of her amiable stupidity would have been very different in real life, it is useless to seek such a purpose. The whole thing is a fantasia : it is melodrama smiling at itself. It lacks even the little

serious element of the preceding "Puritan" plays, and must be estimated by its entertaining qualities, which are conspicuous. In later years it ran for three months at the Court Theatre. As a literary play its interest is comparatively small, and the reader is exasperated by the attempt to express with phonetic accuracy the speech of a Cockney rascal of Brassbound's crew.

The long interval between "Captain Brassbound" and "Man and Superman" was relieved only by the publication of the short and fantastic sketch "The Admirable Bashville" (1901). Someone in America proposed to dramatise Shaw's prize-fighting novel, "Cashel Byron's Profession," and to prevent an outrage he roughly dramatised it himself. It is an amusing and negligible extravagance: a joke in pompous blank verse wildly alternating with very vernacular speech. Some of the lines are actually taken from the Elizabethan poets, and Shaw affected to believe that no one could discriminate between his own blank verse and theirs. It is good reading for an idle hour.

By the beginning of 1903 Shaw had written ten plays, and had had in the theatre only one modest success. Ten years of amazing industry, experiments in every variety of drama and comedy, had left the general public callous or disdainful. He has spoken of the way in which the G. B. S. of the *Saturday Review* prepared the way for, and even impudently (he says) heralded the genius of, George Bernard Shaw the dramatist. All this is humorous exaggeration. One may be a paragon of dramatic or literary criticism without having any respectable skill in production. It was chiefly Shaw's Socialism and general criticism of life which secured for him a

relatively small public, in whose praises a friendly critic like Archer occasionally joined. He was now past the age at which dramatists usually gain the public ear—he was in his forty-eighth year—and it looked as though his appeal would be permanently confined to the narrow public of the readers of his printed plays. Outside England he was little known, except to Socialists; and the continental Socialists, as a rule, were embittered against him by his attacks on them and their "illusions." It must have occurred to his friends that he had, from the point of view of influence, made a grave mistake in deserting the platform and the press to begin his long and futile assault upon the theatre.

But the year 1903 witnessed a remarkable change in his position. In that year his plays began to be performed before Austrian and German audiences, and to receive the high praise of great critics like Brandes, and the story of his success in the United States opened. Londoners learned with astonishment that the plays they rejected were being regarded as international art, and, for all his supposed disdain of the foreigner, the Englishman has no more effective stimulus than foreign appreciation of his writers or artists. In the same year Shaw published "*Man and Superman*," and critics could no longer question his ability, however much they might resent his dramatic forms.

"*Man and Superman*" represents not only the culmination of his artistic skill, but that important stage in the development of his opinions which I have described in a previous chapter. The Eugenic movement was making progress in England, and Shaw yielded to its fascination. His increasingly pessimistic estimate of his generation was suddenly

relieved by the discovery that there was no need to drill it with education, and evangelise it with Socialism, before any progress could be made. It would be much wiser and more economical to take the better specimens and let them breed the new generation: as to the others, he threw out dark hints at lethal chambers, sterilisation, and so on. The failure of education and Socialist propaganda now disturbed him little. That was not the real purpose of the Life-Force. It was going to annihilate this generation, as it annihilated the reptiles of old, and create a new species, the Superman. He approached his new task, therefore, in a more philosophic mood than ever. His play *might* be performed; he would not overload it with philosophy. But it would need "a pit of philosophers" to appreciate it, and he must appeal to readers. Hence the predominantly literary form of the new work, with its prodigious preface and its lengthy interlude and its fiery appendix. Certainly Shaw has never done a more brilliant piece of literary work.

I have examined the opinions expressed in the preface and appendix, and need only consider here what light they throw on the drama. Walkley had suggested that he should write a *Don Juan* play. Instead of rejecting what most people would regard as an unalterably erotic subject, Shaw reflected on it and found in it a most ingenious method of presenting his own ascetic philosophy. Professor Masson once described Goethe's *Mephistopheles* as a logical development of Milton's *Satan* after a century or two of experience in tempting men. Why not give *Don Juan* the benefit of experience and show him converted to asceticism, and very much bored by the attentions or intentions of women? Dr Henderson

says, apparently on Shaw's authority, that John Tanner, or Don Juan Tenorio in the twentieth century, is not Shaw, but H. M. Hyndman, his old Socialist opponent. There is much more of Shaw than of Hyndman in him, and Mr Granville Barker made the character an exact reproduction of Shaw. In sentiment, at least, he is Shaw, especially in the Interlude in Hell and the "Revolutionist's Handbook."

The love-episode, on which the play is built, is purely artificial. It is love-making seen through Shaw's academic spectacles. Ann Whitefield makes love to Tanner because she must: the Life-Force, which is as inexorable as the Fate of the Greek tragedians, is incarnated in her. The dramatic conflict is not merely the conflict of a girl's whim and a man's aversion from marriage. Behind this petty struggle Shaw sees the cosmic struggle of the two incarnations of the Life-Force, as he conceives it. It seeks self-consciousness in the genius and makes him egotistic; it impels woman to life-giving, and, when the two meet, we have the most dramatic conflict in the world. But the Life-Force, or cosmic Will, being one, it makes the woman persistently hunt the man until he yields. This is the underlying philosophy, or, as Shaw afterwards said, the religion of the play. In the preface to the popular edition he observes that Natural Selection is dead on the one hand, and "garden-of-Edenism" on the other. A new Bible is needed, and he, "with later lights of science to guide" him, makes this contribution to it, and allows the public to purchase it for a few pence on that account.

Happily—because one cannot take the obscuring of his philosophy as a very serious loss—this new gospel is effectively concealed by the dramatic

trimming with which Shaw proposed to adorn it. It is fairly safe to say that not one in a thousand of the audiences who have enjoyed the play, especially in the United States, has the dimmest perception of its moral. The only serious didactic element they see in it is a suggestion that marriage is not a necessary condition to maternity; I have seen ladies stalk indignantly from the theatre when Tanner propounds this gospel. Of the cosmic conflict of purposes they have no suspicion, and Ann's pursuit of Tanner, which all regard as a singularly perverse taste on her part, is deemed an unconventional suggestion that a woman has as much right to do the hunting as the man, or as a libel on the actual life of women. The play is merely taken as a comedy. Tanner's wit, irony, and paradox are artistically set against the muddle-headed fussiness of Shaw's typical middle-class father (Ramsden) and the muddle-headed romance of Shaw's typical middle-class young man. A chauffeur with supermannic coolness and impudence (Straker), a couple of stagey Americans, and a fantastic group of brigands, help to obscure the new religion. Ann Whitefield's ingenuous persistence and conscientious mendacity are, as I said, merely regarded as part of Shaw's irrepressible tendency to caricature; and her conventional mother and Octavius's conventional sister merely enhance the artistic effect. It is a comedy of romantic love-making, as far as action goes, without romantic sentiment: eked out by the minor comedy of the collapse of a middle-class family at a supposed moral transgression and an entirely burlesque scene among brigands.

The comedy itself, as it is presented on the stage, is not a masterpiece. Archer thought it "primitive

in invention and second-rate in execution." Huneker would only allow "for the sake of argument" that it was a play. Hamon thinks it "a splendid philosophic piece," but is clearly referring to the written play. If we set aside the very original *Interlude in Hell*, which is always omitted, the plot is slender and the course of the play never quickened into really dramatic moments. As in the case of so many of Shaw's plays, the best rule for the playgoer is: Enjoy and be thankful, and do not attempt to analyse and classify. You can only classify what the author has previously classified, and Shaw does not follow the rules. It is a comedy, entertaining enough to obscure its own philosophy. We roar at Tanner's quips and paradoxes and dread of marriage, without the least thought of his being a genius with a mission. We enjoy Ann's evasions and subterfuges and fibs, and do not care twopence about the Life-Force in her. She is by no means "everywoman," as Shaw said, and by no means his "most gorgeous creation," as he claims. She is a very ordinary young lady credited with an unnatural desire to wed (not a love of) Tanner, and forced by her conventional surroundings to conceal it and play the hypocrite. As to Tanner's long speeches, we have to forgive them when Shaw (by the mouth of Ann) laughs at himself for them; and the long dialogues are too witty and funny to quarrel with.

So the comedy has had a well-deserved success on the stage—it was presented 176 times at the Court Theatre, and I believe that its royalties brought him in one year, especially from the United States, more than ten thousand pounds—but its philosophy is reserved for the faithful few who read the book, and its religion remains with its founder. The

published work—preface, play, interlude, and appendix—is one of the most serious and finished presentments of Shaw's views. It is not fortunate for him that it embodies a phase of development of which he soon saw the error. But we have sufficiently discussed all this. The Interlude in Hell alone calls for special consideration.

Under the stars of the Sierra Nevada John Tanner dreams himself back into the shape of Don Juan Tenorio, Ann into the shape of Doña Aña de Ulloa ; and they gather with Ann's father and the devil in the underworld to discuss life. Hell is too comfortable, too sensuous, for the new Don Juan. The devil presides over a genial, art-loving colony of sober Epicureans, and lures men away from the chilly heights of heaven. They consider Don Juan a "social failure," a man with no "soul," and press him to leave them and go to heaven. He is "bored" in hell, and those who are happy in it are the really wicked. "Hell, in short, is a place where you have nothing to do but amuse yourself"; in heaven "you live and work." The devil left heaven because he was bored there, and founded the rival colony for the tranquil enjoyment of love, beauty, art, and sentiment, to which all are migrating from heaven. Only the few who love "the work of helping Life in its struggle upward" remain in heaven.

The fantastic and intellectually brilliant scene is, in other words, a naked presentment of the philosophy of life which is veiled in the drama itself. Hell is a temperament: the Epicurean temperament which Shaw despises. He rarely uses the word Epicurean, because, probably, people wrongly take it to imply an unrestrained indulgence in sense-pleasure. It is, on the contrary, the feeling that work is only a healthy

condition of earning enjoyment (sensuous *and* spiritual) : that the supreme ideal of men is to eliminate misery from the earth and promote tranquil happiness. This is a mean and despicable aim—it is hell—to the new Don Juan, John Tanner, or Bernard Shaw. Your highest ideal is to co-operate austerely with the Life-Force, and even Aña, or Ann Whitefield, is converted to a belief in this Superman, and sets out in search of a father for him. If a persistent Rationalist asks why in the name of creation he should adopt this bloodless and joyless philosophy of life, Shaw makes a concession to his weakness for "reasons." If men do not co-operate with the Life-Force, it will cast them aside, as it cast aside the Mesozoic reptiles, and will incarnate its highest aspirations in some other creature. So healthy, sensuous women must pursue brainy men and pin them, despite their wriggling and hatred of sex, to the matrimonial board. We exist for the sake of the next generation ; we must exchange the Christian God or the Epicurean ideal for this bleak Calvinistic Life-Force. That is the key of the parable of "Man and Superman." As a comedy, with the parable omitted, it is very popular and entertaining and clever : as a serious literary and philosophical whole it is brilliant and futile and unpopular. People pick out of it the scraps which suit them : the denial of progress, the scorn of democracy, the praise of eugenics, the indictment of England, the denial of moral law, and so on. But of a Shavian cult, in Shaw's deepest sense, there is no trace.

The tremendous ability of "Man and Superman" and the echoes of recognition abroad disposed the English public to welcome the work of Shaw, if he would moderate his satire and conceal his philosophy.

In his next play, "John Bull's Other Island" (1904), he met the public, and there was a reconciliation which gave him his place as a dramatist in the English theatre. Most people, knowing Shaw's unlimited capacity for abusing England, would have expected that, in dealing with the relations of England and Ireland, he would outdo a member of the Clan-na-Gael in denouncing England's record in the sister isle. Instead of this he represented the co-operation of the two nations as mutually useful. Irishmen might put it that he was so eager to stand upright between the contending parties that he fell backward. Most certainly English people were more pleased with his typical Englishman than the Irish were pleased with his "real Ireland." Possibly this was because he wrote the play for the Irish Literary Theatre. It is—if the way of putting it be not too Hibernian—Shaw's custom to hit the man who is present, not the man who is absent.

It was a fine, conciliatory play, very able in characterisation if very loose in plan, so surprisingly moderate in its satire of England that people almost hailed Shaw as a Pro-Saxon. He conceives an engineering partnership of an Englishman, Broadbent, with an Irishman, Doyle, in London. The business prospers because the men's qualities are mutually corrective. In Broadbent (or England, as partner in the Imperial firm) were "the strength, satisfaction, social confidence, and cheerful bumpituousness that money, comfort, and good feeding bring to all healthy people." In Doyle we find "the freedom from illusion, the power of facing facts, the nervous industry, the sharpened wits, the sensitive pride of the imaginative man who has fought his way up through social persecution and poverty." Broad-

bent quite overshadows his partner in the play, and it is not surprising—though Shaw affected to be surprised—that English audiences were flattered. He takes Broadbent on business to Ireland, and purports to show us the real Ireland. As I said in the first chapter, it is not a flattering picture. “Celtic wit” is shown to be a poor myth. There is only one really intelligent and clear-headed man on the stage, and he is regarded by his neighbours as “the mad priest.” The heroine, if one may so describe her, is a good type, but she can scarcely be called distinctively Irish. The whole atmosphere gives a feeling of pettiness, slovenliness, heavy gaiety, and mischievous ignorance. There is really no “plot.” It is a group of characters in relation with Broadbent, and, for all his defects, the Englishman overtops them. Shaw would probably not admit that he is superior to Doyle, but that is one’s impression.

Naturally, the Irish Literary Society found that its actors were not competent to perform the piece—the second play of Shaw’s rejected on that curious ground—and Vedrenne and Barker put it on the stage at the Royal Court Theatre. The Irish question was under discussion at the time, and the play easily got attention. It greatly pleased English audiences, rather to Shaw’s disgust, and ran for 121 nights at the Court. Prominent politicians were seen enjoying it, and the King commanded a performance. It is one of the ironies of Shaw’s life that a play in which he seemed to flatter England won for him at last the ear of London. Certainly the play in itself, as a play, was not calculated to do this. It has nothing like the humour of some of his earlier comedies, and it can scarcely be called a drama. Walkley called it an amusing “farrago.” It was an interesting pre-

sentment of a group of finely drawn characters, with a moral ; and the moral was that England was by no means the villain of the Irish tragedy, as Irishmen thought.

In the preface to the published play Shaw sought to modify the impression he had given. He meant Broadbent to represent that "hysterical, nonsense-crammed, fact-proof, truth-terrified, unballasted sport of all the bogey panics and all the silly enthusiasms that now calls itself 'God's Englishman.'" He represented the Irishman as "clear-headed, sane, hardily callous to the boyish sentimentalities, susceptibilities, and credulities that make the Englishman the dupe of every charlatan and the idolater of every numbskull." He certainly did not succeed in his design, and it is not without significance that he adds: "I like Englishmen much better than Irishmen": though he undoes the compliment, with his usual perversity, by saying afterwards: "It takes an Irishman years of residence in England to respect a blockhead. An Englishman will not respect or like anyone else."

I venture to say that the psychology of this play is as wrong as the philosophy of its predecessor. It is an excellent example of my contention that Shaw is farther from realism than the dramatists he condemns, and that his characters are not at all typical, as Hamon contends. We may put aside as feeble jokes the suggestions that the Englishman of to-day calls himself "God's Englishman" and will respect none but a blockhead. The quintessential point of Shaw's racial psychology is that the Englishman is "muddle-headed," and the Irishman is "clear-headed." He does not admit, of course, that there is a Celtic race and an Anglo-Saxon race. But it

comes to the same thing when he says that there is "an Irish climate which will stamp an immigrant more deeply and durably in two years, apparently, than the English climate will in two hundred." In point of fact, he assigns psychological racial characters more sharply than believers in race generally do ; and it is not uninteresting to remark that his view of the action of environment here is out of joint with his theory of heredity. The Englishman has the virtues of money—strength, confidence, etc.—to redeem his muddle-headedness and illusions, and his prosperity enables him to tolerate leaders who "muddle through" imperial affairs. The Irishman has been schooled to reality and clearness of mind. I have spent half my life in intimate association with Irishmen, of various classes, and emphatically deny that they are clearer-headed and less duped by illusions than the English. Shaw is not relying on observation at all, but is complacently building on the foolish proverb about Englishmen "muddling through." If the Boer War is quoted, one may confidently challenge comparison of our whole statesmanship, on internal or external affairs, with that of Germany, France, or Italy ; while the whole history of Ireland is against the claim that the Irish are clear-headed and free from illusions. Shaw would probably class himself as Irish in intellectual temperament. It must seem to many that the vagaries of his philosophy and the delightful extravagances of his comedies hardly confirm his estimate.

In the preface to this play Shaw glances at the religious and political problem of Ireland. For the Catholic clergy he has no more tenderness than George Moore. He severely condemns their rapacity and their efforts to restrict the culture of the laity

But, like most Irishmen who belong to neither religious camp, he believes that Home Rule will lead to a curtailment of the power of the clergy. The Protestants will co-operate with the growing Catholic resentment of the despotism of the priests, and check it. English officials in Ireland form a Mutual Admiration Society. The Irish Protestant does not belong to the Society, though he profits by it, and he will not be pained at the disappearance of the Castle. The Church will seek advantages from an Irish Parliament, and the reaction in the country will be such that you will find "To Hell with the Pope" chalked on the walls of southern Catholic towns. From the broader point of view the gain will be important. Ireland, with its perennial dwelling on the conquest, is like a man with a broken arm; you must set it before he will do any good. At present "Nationalism stands between Ireland and the light of the world," inspiring futile oratory and bitter dissension. Responsible self-government will deflate the windbags.

The simultaneous success of "Man and Superman" and "John Bull's Other Island" was enhanced by the appearance in 1905 of "Major Barbara." This play has not been nearly so successful as its predecessors, though Julius Bab thinks it Shaw's finest dramatic work. One can hardly agree to that estimate; without, however, endorsing the severe criticisms of Archer and Walkley and other English critics. It shows a return to the didactic model of "Widowers' Houses" and "Mrs Warren." The moral—the evils of poverty and the opportunity of wealth—is by no means hidden away under a sugar-coat, yet it does not stand out in blatantly propagandist speeches and it is of such a general nature

that few could demur to it. There is a secondary theme, the question whether tainted money may be used for high causes, but it is not important in the play. Some saw in it also an attack on the Salvation Army, which Shaw repudiates, and Julius Bab's high praise of it is based on the theory that it represents a dramatic struggle of antagonistic influences for the soul of Barbara. The latter theme seems to be an incidental dramatic element in the rather straggling story.

The main purpose is the praise of money and the denunciation of poverty. In the preface to "Man and Superman," only two years before, Shaw had said that the attack on poverty did not matter much, as it only interfered with the happiness of the individual, not the purpose of the Life-Force. Now he returns to Socialism and denounces poverty as the root of all evil. He does this by the quaint expedient of virtually extolling Andrew Undershaft, a manufacturer of explosives, which Shaw loathes as cordially as he loathes beer or brothels. Instead of caricaturing Undershaft, a middle-class man living on tainted money, he presents him as quite an amiable and admirable embodiment of the Life-Force. Through Undershaft he denounces poverty as "the worst of all crimes." "All the other crimes," he says, "are virtues beside it; all the other dishonours are chivalry itself by comparison." Through Undershaft's mildly cynical mouth he pours disdain on the Salvation Army and its futile tinkering with poverty, and announces that the seven deadly sins are not impurity, etc., but "food, clothing, firing, rent, taxes, respectability, and children," and a man must redeem his soul by making money. Shaw would almost make poverty the one crime which the police are to detect and punish, he says.

He secures the dramatic conflict in a fantastic way. Undershaft's daughter Barbara, the granddaughter of an earl, is a major in the Salvation Army. That brings us near the limits of plausibility, but Shaw, the realist, pushes us deliberately beyond. Barbara has a learned Greek scholar for a lover, and induces him to masquerade as a drummer in the Army. She speaks of him as her " bloke," and mingles piety and levity and slang in a way which shows how appallingly superficial was Shaw's study of his material in real life. " When I die," she says in the end, " let God be in my debt, not I in his ; and let me forgive him as becomes a woman of my rank." That is a piece of pure Shavian paganism (man's relation to the Life-Force) put into the mouth of a woman of such deep Christian sentiments that she can belong to the West End and live in the East. But all the characters are more or less freakish. Shaw's pretence of realism and anti-romance is genially left on the shelf. He writes of a world which is real enough, but utterly refuses to put real characters in it. Most of them are not even human. Cusins, the lover-scholar who plays the drum, is a wild and entertaining bit of fantasy.

The play amused by its extravagance and its smart dialogue. It is quite impossible to regard it seriously as a dramatic struggle over a soul, or as a social gospel. The end, in fact, is as fantastic as the middle. Barbara, who has left the Army because it receives tainted money, returns to it with the gospel of St Andrew Undershaft. No more futile working among starvelings. Her learned lover becomes a partner in the explosive business, and she is to spend her ardour in the salvation of the well-fed artisans. The burden of the play was a paradox, rather than an offensive

gospel, to the British public. They were quite ready to agree that Undershaft was justified in making a fortune by manufacturing explosives, and that the Salvation Army were justified in taking contributions from such men and from brewers. It was a novelty to find that Shaw, apparently, did not want to take away Undershaft's money and divide it among the protegees of the Salvation Army, and to have him caricaturing the poor instead of the middle class. One needs a close acquaintance with Shaw's views to understand that any serious idea underlies this fantastic play. Happily, the public knew very little of Shaw's serious views, and they enjoyed the fantasia for its fun and wit and paradox. It did not, however, run half as long as its predecessor at the Court Theatre.

One or two little plays of no importance followed "Major Barbara." "Passion, Poison, and Putrefaction" was a slight farcical sketch written for the benefit performance at Regent's Park in aid of the funds of the Actors' Orphanage in 1905. It is not included in Shaw's published works. About the same time a short piece was needed to help out the bill in New York, where Daly was presenting "The Man of Destiny," and Shaw made a malicious thrust at the "Candidamaniacs." In the previous year New York audiences had enthused over *Candida*; New York women shed tears over her beautiful soul, and New York journalists tried hard to settle whether she was a heroine of virtue or a thoroughly bad woman. Shaw discomfited one-half of his admirers by declaring that she was a woman with no moral principle whatever, and he then turned on the sentimentalists, who forgave or admired her immorality, with a satirical sketch—a satire of *their Candida*—

entitled "How He Lied to Her Husband." The romantic heroine fancies herself a *Candida*, and has an admirer. The way in which he lied to her husband, at the lady's request, is exceedingly amusing, but the situation and characters are purely satirical. A third and still slighter dramatic sketch, "The Interlude at the Playhouse," was written in the following year for the opening of that theatre.

Since that period of belated success Shaw has written one or more plays every year, and they still come from his fertile and versatile pen. In 1906 appeared "The Doctor's Dilemma." From the point of view of theatrical representation it is far inferior to its immediate predecessors and has had less success. Shaw had chosen a dangerous theme and was unable to keep within artistic bounds. We saw in an earlier chapter what he thinks of the medical profession. The shadow of his great bugbear, Huxley—Rationalist, Utilitarian, and Vivisector—seems to lie over the whole of the profession which he adorned, and under that shadow Shaw imagines surgeons cutting out appendages, doctors dosing patients, and professors torturing animals, with the feelings of schoolboys or savages. He decided, on hearing some gossip about an experiment at a hospital, to turn it into a drama and satirise the doctors.

Contrary to his usual practice, he makes the first act utterly undramatic and heavily satirical. A medical man has been knighted and his more distinguished colleagues come to congratulate him. It is a tract in dramatic form: a rather ponderous exposure of their supposed quackeries and jealousies. The second act introduces the dilemma, and promises a very dramatic development. Sir Colenso Ridgeon, who has discovered a treatment of tuberculosis, has

room for only one more patient at his hospital. A pretty woman calls and induces him to take her husband, a consumptive artist; but it turns out that the artist is a worthless and unscrupulous man, and there is a very worthy and needy medical man, a friend of theirs, who requires treatment. Which is it to be? Are they—the whole group of doctors discuss the dilemma—to prefer the good pictures of Dubedat to good men like Dr Blenkinsop? At first it seems that the doctors act admirably, and the artist abominably. They let Dubedat die in order to save the life of Blenkinsop. But Shaw was not disposed to set the British public admiring the medical profession, and he complicates their motives.

No doubt it is more artistic or dramatic to complicate the motives, but Shaw's aim was not artistic. He wanted to lower the character of his medical men, as well as to expose their charlatanry. The latter purpose he attains by supposing that in private conversation they freely admit it to each other. He has, however, so poor an opinion of medical men (generally), especially in the higher rank of the profession, that he seems to think nothing too gross or implausible to attribute to them. His four heads of the profession take the keenest interest in, and spend hours with, the utterly unscrupulous artist, not so much because he paints well as because he has a pretty wife. It is not, of course, *impossible* that three leading doctors should fall in love with the wife, and prospective widow, of an obscure artist, but the measure of intelligence which Shaw gives Mrs Dubedat does not make it plausible. They have themselves either weak intelligence or weak character. The particular case of Sir Colenso Ridgeon is worse. He acknowledges to the widow, when Dubedat dies, that

he was "so idiotic about her" that he let the man die in order that he might marry her. In reality he did more than this. He gave a dose of his specific cure for tuberculosis to the brother physician who took charge of Dubedat (and who also hoped to marry the widow, and, apparently, eventually did), knowing that it would be misapplied and the patient's death would be greatly accelerated. He killed the man, in effect, to marry the widow for her good looks. His plea that he saved her from a scoundrel makes no difference to the issue, and only disgusts her. It may be urged that a dramatist has as much right to make an individual doctor stoop to crime and folly as any other character. But it is another matter to involve three or four of the heads of the profession, and, as the whole published work is a virulent tract against the profession, one sees that the aim was not artistic and the effect is disagreeable. Whether or no we agree that an artist should have a purpose, the artistic feeling is a totally different thing from social or humanitarian enthusiasm, and is often disturbed by it.

Shaw, like Ibsen, is often amused at the interpretation of his work by disciples, as happened again in this case. Dubedat was a scoundrel. He lied, stole, deceived his wife and everybody else, and laughed at the notion of a moral limitation of his thirst for pleasure. Since Shaw preached the invalidity of moral law as a control of the individual will, and made Dubedat speak of himself as "a disciple of Bernard Shaw," many supposed that he approved the artist's conduct. He ridicules the idea in his preface to "The Sanity of Art." He does not believe in granting license to genius, he says. It is true that the Superman will bring with him a new code of

conduct, but it is very difficult to say " how much selfishness we ought to stand from a gifted person for the sake of his gifts." This is really an evasion of the issue, and it exposes a weakness of Shaw's theory of ethics. The question is not whether *we* ought to tolerate the thefts and lies and grossness of a gifted artist ; most people will not have much difficulty in deciding that issue. The real question is whether there is any " ought " for Dubedat himself. On Shaw's theory there is not. He acts on his own consciousness of the impulse of the Life-Force. If his interpretation differs from yours, you have no authority to condemn him unless you appeal to social considerations, or moral law.

" Getting Married " (1908) is a dramatic conversation on the subject of marriage and divorce. Shaw had in all his plays refused to follow the custom of dividing acts into scenes. Now the whole play constitutes a single scene or act, and nearly the whole interest centres in the characters and their views. It is less academic than such a description suggests, as there is a good deal of action implied in the conversation and in the end the scene resolves itself into something like farce ; but it is a peculiar type of " play." In effect it is a symposium on marriage, the participants being a genial old bishop, his wife and her sister (both of liberal views), a philosophic greengrocer and his transcendentalist wife, and various middle-class young ladies and gentlemen who stroll into the scene. The wit of the dialogue, the idiosyncrasy of the characters, and the exaggerated humour of much of the episode, make it entertaining, but it is in essence a treatise on marriage by a group of people who know a good deal about it.

All Shaw's objections to marriage appear, some-

times in the most amusingly incongruous spokesmen. The bishop's sister-in-law is the type of woman who genially declines to be bored with the life-long companionship of a man, yet would like to have a child : a character finely and admiringly drawn, one of the best and most natural "ladies" (apart from the implausibility of her episcopal status) in Shaw's gallery of women. The bishop's wife confesses to polyandric impulses, and, to the horror of the prim general who represents old-fashioned sentiment, the bishop smiles. The greengrocer tells the bishop's wife (who listens as genially as if the episcopal palace were an Ibsen club) how his wife's excessive fitness for domestic life makes home impossible for him, and the wife, a weird and wonderful creation, falls into trances and discourses of love in a way that is unique in Shaw's works. I have quoted one of her utterances in the chapter on marriage. The bishop's brother has had a divorce by collusion, and his daughter languidly hesitates to go to church on the wedding-morn. In the end they try to frame a new scheme of marriage, and have to abandon it as a sort of problem of squaring the circle. It is a novel and witty attack on marriage in a thin dramatic dress ; it is also futile, because the situation is unreal.

The banned play, "The Showing Up of Blanco Posnet," followed in the year 1909. Shaw returned to his melodramatic experiments and wrote, in form, a crude and fiery story of life in the Wild West. In the preface Shaw declares that it is "really a religious tract in dramatic form" ; in fact, he gives to the play the sub-title : "A Sermon in crude melodrama." It is a short one-act play, designed, apparently, like "The Devil's Disciple," to show that impulses to good action are found in what are conventionally

regarded as the most debased characters and are by no means confined to characters who have a complete stock of good principles. Blanco is a drunken wastrel who discovers his brother converted to pious ways and enjoying a high local repute as Elder Daniels. The Elder secretly receives him, but refuses to pay money which he virtually owes, and Blanco makes off in the early morning with a horse. The horse, however, had been borrowed from the sheriff, and Blanco is brought to the rough court on the lethal charge of horse-stealing, where a prostitute, whom he insults, swears away his life. At the last moment a woman forces her way in and declares that she stole the horse, and one gathers from his incoherent ravings and her story that he gave her the horse, though the pursuers were after him, to ride to the doctor with a sick child. The child died on the way and she returns to save Blanco. Even the prostitute is so overcome that she withdraws and acknowledges her perjury, and the curtain falls—Shaw is quite determined to have a love-scene—on the matrimonial alliance of the wastrel and the harlot.

The moral, which is very obviously fitted into the story for the reader to discover, is that good impulses come from an internal principle, not from moral maxims. "If," says Shaw, "our silly censorship would permit its performance, it might possibly help to set right-side-up the perverted conscience and reinvigorate the starved self-respect of our considerable class of loose-lived playgoers whose point of honour is to deride all official and conventional sermons." One can hardly imagine it touching the heart of this type of playgoer; at the most, it might draw a few facile tears from the typical melodrama-audience. It is powerfully written, but the scene is

too remote from our experience for us to test its truth, and one cannot help feeling that Shaw has made his vicious characters act virtuously merely to prove his theory; that it is not a legitimate deduction from life, but an interested construction of characters out of material borrowed from Bret Harte's stories. The group of drabs, sluts, and drunkards which fills the scene is unpleasant, and one finds it very difficult to distinguish between the influence of whisky and the influence of the Life-Force in Blanco's hysterical behaviour. The humour of the piece is slender, and is too apt to be expressed in such passages as this speech of the hypocritical Elder to his brother: "I tell you, Blanco, what keeps America to-day the purest of the nations is that when she's not working she's too drunk to hear the voice of the tempter." Americans do not regard it as a piece of accurate realism, and the purpose is too thin and unconvincing to redeem the play.

It had, however, no opportunity to reach the loose-lived playgoer. Blanco holds a crude version of Shaw's theology, mixed with delirium tremens, and he talks of God thwarting him in a way which shocked the censor. "He [God] always has a trick up his sleeve. . . . He's a sly one. He's a mean one." It was certainly ludicrous of the censor to pass all the real coarseness which the theme involved in the play, and run his pencil through such passages as these. Shaw rightly declined to alter them and the play was banned. It was afterwards performed in Dublin, but in 1909 and 1913 the censor repeated his objections to the play, and it has not appeared in England. The folly of the censure gave Shaw a long-desired opportunity, and the published volume contains thirty pages of play and a hundred pages of

vigorous attack on the Censorship. He tells at length the story of how he scared the Joint Committee on the Censorship, and how its members avoided his evidence. One finds some extenuation for their conduct on learning that the paper he wished to submit to them, or force on them, consisted of fifty pages of thoroughly Shavian discussion of the nature of immorality and the function of the drama. The immoral act is "not necessarily sinful," he says, but is "whatever is contrary to established manners and customs." His very forcible and crushing indictment of the Censorship should be read by all who have a lingering respect for that institution, but it cannot be discussed here.

Instead of being intimidated by the thunder, the censor proceeded in the following year (1910) to condemn Shaw's next play, "Press Cuttings," on even more frivolous grounds. It is an amusing little extravaganza or burlesque. The Prime Minister, Balsquith, dresses as a suffragette and chains himself to the scraper at General Mitchener's door. It is the only way in which he can elude the suffragette pickets in Downing Street and reach the general. The conversation that follows is mainly intended to expose the incompetence and nervousness of our military men and the corruption of our political leaders. The censor protested that personalities could not be permitted on the stage, and the names were mockingly changed to Johnson and Bones. Shaw says that he had no intention of caricaturing Mr Asquith and Lord Kitchener, but no one who has read the sketch will think that the censor was unduly suspicious, however foolish it may be to object to pleasantries of the kind.

Two other unimportant sketches followed in 1910.

“The Dark Lady of the Sonnets” was a slight piece in one act, with four characters, written for the matinée in aid of the funds of a National Theatre. Its playful liberties with Shakespeare, who was impersonated by Mr Granville Barker, were resented by many critics. “Misalliance: a Debate in One Sitting,” is described by Mr Baughan as “a repetition of ‘Getting Married’ without its wit, observation, and humanity.” It was produced at the Duke of York’s Theatre in February, and failed to please. A romantic tradesman and a distinguished administrator, with their families, discuss every topic of Shavian interest, until the rather tedious debate is interrupted (or quickened) by the arrival, in an aeroplane, of a kind of John Tanner and an athletic Polish lady of advanced views. Very entertaining talk and some love-making follow, and the episode ends with the rather farcical introduction of an office-boy who demands of the merchant satisfaction for his mother’s “shame.” The witty dialogue and grotesque incident failed to make the piece acceptable, and it was quickly abandoned.

In 1911 Shaw produced the last of his comedies, to date, which has had a conspicuous success. “Fanny’s First Play” held the theatre from April 1911 until the middle of December 1912, almost a record run, and is still popular. The story will be fresh in the mind of the reader. A young lady who has just finished her studies at Cambridge, where she became infected with Fabianism, writes a play, and, without acknowledging the authorship, induces her old-world father to give a private representation of it and ask the leading London critics to judge it. Her play is a thoroughly Shavian presentment of a middle-class suburban home; in fact, the whole piece is a satire

of the English home, framed in a satire of the English dramatic critic.

The ingenious supposition that the play has been written by an inexpert girl may seem to disarm the critic in advance. Its excellences may be ascribed to Shaw and its crudities described as the work of Fanny, or an attempt to do as she would. We need not, however, be intimidated ; though certainly it is one of the cleverest pranks that Shaw has played with the critics. But the features to which one may take exception are so thoroughly Shavian, and the whole comedy is so skilfully wrought, that we may leave the imaginary Fanny out of account.

The play is a medley of impossibilities and improbabilities, laden with a satire so obviously exaggerated that no one's withers are wrung, and brightened by some quaint and most amusing characters. Mrs Gilbey just enters the sphere of possibility as a middle-class mother with an original sense of humour, and her son Bobby might pass as Every-young-man ; but when Bobby entertains a "daughter of joy" in his father's house, with the connivance of a butler, who is the disguised brother of a duke, and Mrs Gilbey smiles on the relation and blesses the ultimate union, we are swept far away from the world of reality. Margaret Knox, a girl whom Bobby discards in favour of his giddy and vulgar little friend, seems to have cost her author some pains, but is hardly successful. The Life-Force winds her up to such a pitch at a religious meeting that she picks up a casual foreigner and rushes to a dance at a questionable establishment, where she is arrested for assaulting the police. She comes out of jail a reformed person : deaf to her pious mother's exhortations, and determined to enjoy life in her own way. The critical

explanation which she has with her religious mother imposes a strain to which neither the dramatist nor the actress seems equal—the implausible cannot be made seriously plausible—and I confess that I turned away with some disgust, as others did, when the fine-natured girl was, in the third act, represented as using her fists on Bobby's face (after very little provocation) with the savagery of a drunken slut.

The whole piece, amusing, original, and deservedly popular as it is, teems with these gross improbabilities, and they are inserted, whether or no you conceive them as concessions to Fanny's crudeness, for the purpose of vituperating the suburban English home. Gilbey snarls like a caged animal during two and three quarter acts, and is only restored to a genial, wine-loving mood by the bad example of his son. Knox is a kind of father whom you might possibly find, after an arduous search, in a city of seven million people, but it is doubtful whether even such a man, if you found him, would ask the brother of a duke, bluntly and publicly, if he were legitimate. The two mothers are entirely charming and unreal: one a lacrimose pietist, who breathes into her moist handkerchief every few minutes that the source of happiness is internal, and the other a placid, bovine, stupid, good-natured old nonentity. All of them behave, when the butler discloses his aristocratic birth, like a compartment-full of half-intoxicated East-enders returning from Southend. And the heavy satire is crowned when, at the close, four of the leading English dramatic critics are represented as undecided whether the play was written by Pinero, Granville Barker, Bernard Shaw, or a gushing young schoolgirl.

“Fanny's First Play” is, apart from its abounding humour and technical excellence, a compendium of

Shaw's charges against the middle class ; and it is a good illustration of his failure to enforce them. From beginning to end it rails at English ignorance, stupidity, prejudice, stodginess, hypocrisy, snobbery, brutality, and domestic dreariness. Lest the moral of it be not plain to all, Shaw lets his Frenchman deliver a ten-minutes' speech on the stupidity and other defects of his countrymen, and his auditors on the stage are all supposed to be too dense to suspect that he is describing *them*. The caricature evidently defeated its purpose, and passed as entertainment—as one of Mr Shaw's delightful inventions—with the crowded audiences. The playgoers probably had little suspicion, as a rule, that the homes of Gilbey and Knox were supposed to be more or less faithful reproductions of their homes in Bayswater or Sydenham ; nor can one say that this was due to density so much as to their superior knowledge of their own establishments. At the most, a man here and there may have imagined that he was enjoying the laugh at his neighbour's expense, and no doubt there was a core of resolute Shavians applauding the realism of the piece. It succeeded so well, however, because it was good fun and very clever imaginary portraiture, and one was not tempted to take any of it seriously.

In the following year, 1912, was written "Androcles and the Lion," and the controversy about Mr Shaw's purpose in writing it has hardly yet subsided. Men with some public reputation for religious penetration, like Sir Oliver Lodge, declare that the play is "profoundly religious," whereas prominent clergymen denounced it as thoroughly irreligious. Apparently Shaw wished to commend the early Christians, but could not resist the temptation to humanise them, and this did not please their professional admirers.

One of the condemned Christians falls in love with a Roman soldier; another makes so vigorous and skilful a struggle for life that the remainder—much to their relief, seemingly—are saved. One alone has to face the lion, and from the remarkable behaviour of the martyr and the stage-animal we gather that they are the old friends of our nursery days, Androcles and the Lion. The tragedy merges into comedy, and the thoughtful part of the audience is left in doubt as to whether Mr Shaw admired or disdains the martyrs. We find the key in his earlier historical plays. He is humanising the romantic figures of early Christian tradition. Beyond that his only clear purpose is to oppose the theoretical peacefulness of early Christianity to the militarism of ancient Rome and modern Christendom. As a more or less serious attempt to urge the gospel of peace it can have had little influence, and you can hardly humanise historical characters by substituting prosy fiction for romantic fiction. It is an interesting suggestion; but it will hardly be doubted that it was the somewhat incongruous element of comedy which kept the play on the boards for two months or so.

Three of Shaw's shorter sketches were also written in 1912. "Overruled" is described by Mr Baughan as "a poor little piece of Shavian dialectics." It is the real sequel to, or continuation of, "Getting Married." It formed a triple bill, with short plays by Pinero and Barrie, at the Duke of York's Theatre in October (1912), and survived only a few nights. Two married couples exchange partners and discuss the muddle, which ensues, until the dinner-gong puts an end to the discussion. Except that current ideas of sex-ethic are ridiculed, one does not gather any definite lesson from the conversation, or "demonstra-

tion." Shaw's mind is poised between the untruth of monogamy and the inconvenience of polygamy. The play was at first entitled "Trespassers will be Prosecuted," as it is still called in some reference-books, but Shaw found that there was already a play with that name. The third 1912 play was "Pygmalion," but this, up to the present, has only been performed in Germany and published in that country.

Though these plays had been slight and unsuccessful, the older plays kept Shaw well in the front rank of English dramatists during 1912. "You Never Can Tell" was revived with considerable success, and "Captain Brassbound's Conversion" had a moderate run, while "Fanny's First Play" continued to attract crowds. Shaw had meantime returned to his congenial task of humanising history, and his next play was "Great Catherine," a moderate success at the Vaudeville. Faithful to his principle of following his artistic impulse rather than rules, Shaw has in this case—and for the first time—divided the piece into scenes. A single act or episode divided into four scenes, each very short, cannot do more than give, in Shaw's words, "a thumbnail sketch of Russian court life in the eighteenth century"; as the third scene is dull and superfluous, moreover, the play becomes a very slight sketch.

Historically, the piece is "founded on fact," but the dramatist builds a good deal of fiction on his facts. Mr Norman M'Kinnel makes Prince Patiomkin a very plausible and amusing blackguard, but the portrait of Catherine, for the sake of which the sketch was presumably written, is not very convincing. Her features are so well known that Shaw could not fail to reproduce them, though it is singular that, with so very definite a personality to reproduce, his

character has not all the idiosyncrasy and sharpness of outline which he usually gives so effectively. Miss Gertrude Kingston hardly improves matters by making Catherine, for some occult reason, speak English with a foreign accent. It is not supposed, since even the Cossacks speak fluent English, that she is really attempting to talk to her English visitor in English. One fancies that Miss Kingston is trying to give the character more individuality. In other historical plays Shaw has aimed at humanising the characters by the simple process of modernising them. Human nature, he insists, is the same in all ages. One could not apply that principle too rigorously to Catherine the Great without erasing her most prominent traits, and the only effect of Shaw's partial application of it is the partial blurring of the very definite personality of Catherine.

One suspects that Shaw's more genuine aim was to have another fling at "God's Englishman." An eighteenth-century officer of the British army visits the Russian court. On his poor head are heaped all Shaw's prejudices or exaggerations. Although he is described as a Bachelor of Arts—and any English officer who would take such a degree in the eighteenth century would be exceptionally intellectual—and a stickler for etiquette, he falls into convulsions of laughter on hearing the name Popoff, chides Catherine the Great for being unwomanly, and commits the hundred atrocities that only "Shaw's Englishman" can commit. As usual, the caricature is so heavy that the English audience enjoys it. We have come to regard it as the *leit-motiv* of the Shavian comedy, and do not grudge it.

CHAPTER IX

THE MAN AND HIS INFLUENCE

IT will now be apparent why a detailed study of Shaw's opinions and their growth must precede any appreciation of his dramas. Essays on the dramas themselves, apart from Shaw's philosophy, generally lead either to fantastic interpretations of his occult meaning or bewildered speculation as to when he is serious and when not. There is a common notion that Shaw takes pleasure in advancing eccentric statements with an air of profound seriousness and then smiling at the critics who take them seriously. This is, as a rule, a complete misconception of the man. There are occasions when he flings out a paradoxical statement for the mere purpose of catching attention, as the showman displays his gorgeous pictures at the fair, but in most of the cases where his less-informed admirers take him to be fooling he is quite serious.

Years ago, when I was less acquainted with his peculiar set of first principles, I ventured, in reviewing an essay of his on modern science, to suggest that his alternate paragraphs ought to be labelled "serious" or "humorous," for the guidance of the innocent reader. I see to-day that the whole of his statements in that essay, outrageous as some of them were, were logical deductions from his deepest convictions. Again, in recent times I have seen large audiences regard as an exquisite joke his suggestion

that the next monarch of the earth may not be a Superman at all, but "a Supersnake or something." He is, however, perfectly serious. His impatience of science has prevented him from mastering its teaching patiently and accurately, and he contends that there are facts in the past story of life in this planet which justify him in thinking that the Life-Force may come to sterility in the human branch of the animal world, or, in a kind of disgust, transfer its higher purpose to some other branch and make it supersede man. Other audiences, even Socialist audiences, smile at his contention that the State ought to settle an income at birth on each individual ; that we ought to examine periodically if each man and woman has earned this income, and politely make an end of those who have failed to do so ; that we ought to give a long rope to criminals and merely tighten the noose when they go too far ; and so on. Yet in these and a score of other equally eccentric opinions Mr Shaw is by no means imitating the deliberate paradoxes of Samuel Butler. They are ideas which arise logically from his principles, or attacks on other people's principles, and he has advocated them consistently for a number of years.

These opinions form the framework of his dramatic constructions, the steel frame, as it were, hidden beneath the decorative exterior. He began his career as an evangelist, setting forth his naked gospel in blunt and incisive speech or explicit pamphlets. Circumstances led him to realise the great potentialities of the stage for putting ideas or sentiments into the mind of people, and he decided to employ the dramatic form. As time went on he learned to moderate the dose of social physic in his productions, and to develop more and more the comedic element which chiefly

secured him an audience. People, as someone once said, learned to expect from Bernard Shaw the opposite of what they expected of him. He could make them applaud his originality even when he put before them a hotch-potch of stale melodramatic situations ; and in point of fact he was original in this. It is waste of time to discuss whether his plays are plays. He invented, if you like, a new way of employing the theatre and the player's art, and, as it was entertaining, the public applauded. That does not imply either failure to reach the current dramatic standard (at which he never aimed) or the genius to transcend it. It implies originality, which is one of the elements of genius.

On the other hand, the critic may justly complain that he has not made good by his own example the strictures which he passed on contemporary dramatists. We may ignore his censure of artists (writers and composers of dramatic comedy, for instance) whose aim is solely to amuse. The Life-Force must be compelled, like every other modern employer, to be satisfied with an eight-hour service, and leave men and women some time for relaxation. It is a sound and admirable function to supply amusement which is consonant with good taste. We may also pass over his contention that the artist must have an idea to propound or defend, and that his morality must not be "second-hand." The latter objection, indeed, is foolish. When the new morality is accepted, if it ever is accepted, even the advanced artist will merely repeat it at second hand. Moreover, the artist who uses his gifts for seriously enforcing the old morality may be as genuine and laudable as the artist who regards it as obsolete. But there is, in point of fact, no apparent reason why art should

include a purpose at all. One might, indeed, say that art cannot include a purpose. It may be used for an ulterior purpose, but it remains a complete and distinct human gift in itself, whether it be so used or no. Here, however, we touch an irreconcilable opposition, because the conflicting views are founded on conflicting tastes or temperaments. There is no neutral or universal principle on which you can contend that an artist may not be content with his ministry as artist. It is only an individual asceticism which can challenge his position.

But Shaw's more persistent and urgent criticism during his few years of service on the *Saturday Review* was that the modern drama was romantic and unreal. The review we have made of his plays shows that he completely failed to reform the stage in this direction. He brought forward the model of Ibsen, and challenged all others by comparison. Even in Ibsen he found one element of untruth or unreality. A tragic ending was no more true to life than the happy ending of the conventional drama or novel ; life goes on, as a rule, and does not suddenly end in a peal of wedding-bells or a suicide. In this single respect Shaw is more realistic than the others. He is by no means always scrupulous in adhering to his principle. In "The Doctor's Dilemma" Dubedat dies and the widow marries again. "Fanny's First Play," "Man and Superman," "Getting Married," and many other plays, end in quite a matrimonial epidemic. "Candida" and half the other plays come to an artistic and psychological conclusion ; they have a much more definite conclusion than, say, Ibsen's "Doll's House" or "Enemy of the People." The truth is that the stage has requirements as well as conventions. To say that you must put on it a slice

of real life, just as it is, is an arbitrary principle. A story is not a picture ; it has action, and it is more congenial both to the artist and the audience to have the action more or less completed, instead of broken off.

All dramatic rules are really conventions, because drama is an imaginative construction. You may take as your convention that the stage shall simply mirror life, or you may decide to use the agents and experiences of life in some other way. Shaw decided, twenty years ago, that the stage was to reflect real life, and ran amok amongst our dramatists with that idea in his hand. Then he turned to preaching by example, and there never was a baser desertion of principle. He has given us, in his twenty-nine plays, a wonderfully varied gallery of characters, nearly all very definite and different, yet very few of them belong to the world of reality. The great majority of them are creatures of his fertile and original imagination. A large proportion of them could not live, or certainly never did live, in the flesh ; and, where they may be in their fundamental traits conceived as portraits of living persons, we find him almost always making a liberal use of the photographer's art of "touching up." In his portraits he is generally as little realistic as Aubrey Beardsley ; but he prefers, as a rule, to make his characters himself.

We have seen this sufficiently in our review of his plays. From the first (in "Widowers' Houses") he constructs his villains—and they are all villains—as arbitrarily as Dickens did. In "The Philanderers" he puts a real person, Clement Scott, amongst his artificial characters, but the secret would never have been penetrated if he had not revealed it. In "Mrs Warren's Profession" he is even more arbitrary,

and he diverges further and further from realism. I am not thinking merely of the impossible butlers who enliven "You Never Can Tell" or "Fanny's First Play." His middle-class parent is always a caricature, and his women are rarely like the women one meets in those particular situations. When a class is odious to him, on general principles, he gives its representative in his dramas a touch of the tar-brush. When a man or woman is to exemplify a Shavian theory he puts an additional spring in his or her composition. He calls this bringing to light the real inner motives of their actions, which they and their favourite dramatists conspire to conceal ; and his admirers repeat that his characters are real people dissected. In point of fact he is a fantasist : the hardest reality is as supple as indiarubber to his imagination : human material is plasticine which he moulds as he wills. It is half the charm of his plays.

He had set out, in particular, to correct the current dramatic treatment of the love-theme, and in this again he failed, or, rather, ignored the device on his banner. There was too much love-making on the stage and it was unreal. In his first three plays his characters made love quite as conspicuously as, and less really than, in any contemporary drama, and there are few of his plays in which they have not continued to do it. The only exceptions are, I think, "Captain Brassbound's Conversion" and "Cæsar and Cleopatra" ; the latter play comes as near amorousness as the disparity of age permits, and in the former the disparity of characters absolutely forbids it. In all the other plays the love-theme is prominent ; in some it ends in quite an orgie of marriages.

It may be suggested that he has retained the love-

theme in order to treat it more realistically. In fact, one of the admiring writers on Shaw thinks that the love-making of Ann Whitefield and John Tanner (which is an outrageous piece of theorising) and of Valentine and Gloria in "You Never Can Tell" (which is almost as bad) is "superb" in its "mystic and inner truth." The contention is that Shaw lays bare the psychology of lovers instead of merely describing their outward caresses. On the contrary, he denies the caresses altogether, though he will hardly maintain that they are confined to the stage and are not found in real life. In how many of Shaw's thirty plays do lovers caress each other? He conceives their real love-making as an economic calculation or mystic impulse which drives the woman to the man, who is almost always more or less bored and indifferent. He is not giving us psychology at all, but a fantastic theory of a very simple and common occurrence. He is not a "professor of natural psychology," as he claims; he is nearly as far removed from it, on this point, as Immanuel Kant. Probably Eugene in "Candida" is the only character in his plays who is really in love, and Eugene is too morbid and unnatural in other respects to be a model of real life.

Shaw had perceived two truths which he made the basis of his "psychology." On the one hand, there is much calculation in love-making among real persons; on the other hand, there is much romantic decoration of love-making in fiction. But he has made the mistake of generalising these experiences and maintaining that they are the rule rather than the exception. His power of observation was thwarted by his habitually low estimate of human nature and his asceticism. He is quite right in contending that

love is not the lofty, spiritual element which some romantic writers represent it to be ; neither is it the frigid and inartistic approach of the sexes which he represents it to be. But because he has a disdain of the sensuous enjoyment which most lovers, consciously or unconsciously, experience in it, and thinks the approach of the sexes only a preliminary of the grave function of creating the Superman, he has wholly failed to teach contemporary dramatists realism. The average musical comedy is in this respect nearer to life than his malicious dissection or imagination of motives.

Has he succeeded in his more important aim of using dramatic art for educational purposes ? One may confidently say that he has not succeeded to any great extent. The early plays, in which the audience could not possibly miss the lesson, have been rarely presented on the stage, and in the literary form they are confined to a relatively small group of readers who are mostly of advanced views. Shaw scolds the public severely, or lightly rails at it, because it will not patronise plays which provoke thought. There is much truth in his charge, but the public might justly bring a counter-charge. He has chosen to put the evil in an exaggerated and unreal form, or in so exceptional a form that it lies beyond the experience or control of most people. The docile disciple ought, after witnessing "Widowers' Houses," to find out such men as Sartorius in real life and pay critical attention to them. He will, however, probably be unable to find any such person ; certainly not one in ten thousand of the middle-class young ladies he meets on the Rhine or at the theatre has been educated and fed on the rents from squalid slums. Similarly, the convert to Shaw's gospel would have

to wait many generations before he would meet an English baronet who derived his income from continental brothels, or a Girton girl whose mother was a prostitute. Shaw believes that a problem will attract more attention if it be stated in violent or paradoxical form. The fate of his earlier plays shows that, as is not unnatural, this is not generally correct. "Mrs Warren's Profession" has not opened the eyes of multitudes to the "white-slave traffic." Its readers are, for the most part, men and women of social enthusiasm who already know and resent it. A recent debate in Parliament, and its echoes in the press, caught the attention of ten thousand people for every one who read Shaw; nor, when the occasion arose, was there any disposition to suppress the discussion.

The contrast of the success of Dickens shows us a special reason for Shaw's failure in these explicit problem-plays. Dickens, apparently, committed the same fault of incarnating the evil he attacked in such obviously exaggerated characters as Squeers, Ralph Copperfield, Jingle, Sergeant Buzfuz, etc. Yet few resented his use of the art of fiction for social reform, and he had a mighty influence in preparing the public demand for reform. One important reason why he succeeded where Shaw failed was that he did not alienate the sympathy of the middle class to which he appealed; he did not suggest that his villains were typical representatives of it, and did not caricature it as a whole. Shaw, on the other hand, frames his plays in such sweeping and acrid generalisations about the middle class, and makes its representatives so consistently stupid and unjust, that you must regard his characters either as amusing fictions or unfortunate libels.

Dickens did not announce that his purpose was to show how the comfort of the middle class was based on tainted incomes—on abominable schools, or usury, or parasitism. He suggested that certain men who were a disgrace to the middle class did these things, and the general public were quite ready to denounce a Squeers or a Copperfield or a Mulberry Hawk. Shaw professed to attack the middle class, and they resented the suggestion that any large proportion of them lived on incomes derived from slums or loose houses. As far as these things transpire, the owners of such places are men and women whom you do not meet in hotel-gardens on the Rhine or in rural vicarages. Similarly, in "*The Doctor's Dilemma*," the suggestion of inferior character is too comprehensive; the context of the published drama shows that it is an attack on a class. In "*Fanny's First Play*" it is too plainly implied that these drawing-room and dining-room scenes, with their eternal snarls and groans, only relieved by concertina-performances in the butler's pantry with an hilarious street-girl, represent daily life in an English home. The balance is not restored, as it is in Dickens, by the introduction of estimable members of the class.

These are Shaw's most directly propagandist plays, and it is not surprising that, as such, they failed. In most of the plays the philosophy is so implicit that it has generally needed a subtle controversy and an authoritative declaration by the author to make it clear. The general public has enjoyed the play and taken no interest in the subsequent discussion of motives. "*Man and Superman*," for instance, has no moral for the theatrical audience. They know nothing of the Life-Force which impels Ann to hunt Tanner and makes Tanner reluctant to marry her.

To them Tanner is an eccentric bachelor, and Ann a young lady of disputable taste ; even the impossible fainting-scene at the close, when Ann keeps her failing heart alive until she is assured that Tanner has not repudiated her lie, merely amuses by its very extravagance. "Candida" is, to the general public, a study of an imaginary temperament in imaginary circumstances ; as long as *Candida* acts as a British matron ought to act we overlook the suggestion that she was quite prepared to do otherwise if she preferred it. Many, in fact, believed that Shaw had been converted to a respectable view of duty, and were greatly disturbed. "Major Barbara" is, to the same general public, a trite recommendation of the value of money. "John Bull's Other Island" is a graceful vindication of the Englishman's beneficent activity in Ireland. The great majority of the comedies which have found any considerable favour convey no lesson at all, except to the zealous few who knew it beforehand.

It seems, therefore, not impossible to attempt some estimate of the influence of Shaw's dramatic work. The fact that one London theatre gave five hundred performances of a few of his plays in three years shows that he has at last reached a large circle. Possibly it would not be unjust to say that this great success has not been sustained. Recently I noticed that a suburban theatre was hardly one-third filled at a performance of "Fanny's First Play," and a little later I found "Man and Superman" being performed to almost empty houses in a large provincial city, and "Great Catherine," even with the help of Mr Jerome's bright play, facing a half-empty house. However that may be, an analysis of his audiences would show that the overwhelming majority do not

regard his plays as problem-plays, and are very vague about his ideas. They know only, as a rule, that he is a Socialist and has very perverse views about marriage. On this point they are more tolerant than Shaw imagines. One can see a reference to himself in Lady Britomart Undershaft's words to her son : "I should not have minded his merely doing wrong things : we are none of us perfect. But your father didn't exactly do wrong things : he said them and thought them : that was what was so dreadful." The general public has become genially indifferent to his heresies, as long as he confines the explicit declaration of them to the prefaces of his plays, which they do not read. They like Shaw as a humorist, a wit, a paradoxist, a creator of uncommon and clearly defined characters and refreshing situations. One does not hear of many conversions to his views in the theatre. Fiction is fiction : sociology deals with facts. When you attempt to blend them the reader or hearer will, according to his preconceptions, regard the whole as fact or reject the whole as fiction.

The serious nucleus of Shaw's followers consists of Socialists, Rationalists, Ethicists, Humanitarians, and contingents from other advanced movements. In each of these cases the admiration is sectional and restricted. Socialists greatly admire his "Municipal Trading" and generally smile at his equality of income for babies. Rationalists and Ethicists applaud his anti-Christian utterances and smile at his strictures on themselves. Anti-vivisectors, anti-vaccinators, anti-militarists, vegetarians, teetotallers, etc., speak admiringly of him as "one of us," and shudder at his blasphemies and his disdain of marriage. Congregationalists are proud of his patronage and shocked at nine-tenths of his opinions. What the real extent

of his influence is in this heterogeneous and conflicting body it would be difficult to say. One is tempted to say that he is applauded because he agrees with them rather than that he is regarded as a master.

You have to distinguish between his critical and his constructive ideas. On the critical side he has abundant followers and a very real influence. There was never yet, except in ages when the discontented could be burned at the stake, a thoroughly self-satisfied generation. It is an essential condition of progress, and, the more rapid progress becomes, the more surely the critical consciousness of the few will outstrip it. We are so intensely and widely critical to-day precisely because of that vast mental and moral advance in the nineteenth century which Mr Shaw denies. We are capable of higher ideals and less docile to tradition. People who look darkly on ancient or modern civilisations often forget that you may measure the excellence of a generation by the abominable things it says about itself. It has ideals—not ancient illusions, but visions of fairer things—and is impatient.

Shaw is himself one of the best vindications of our age against his strictures. It inspired him, and found him a pulpit from which he might read his "Lamentations." In the preface to "Major Barbara" he says :

" That is what is wrong with the world at present. It scraps its obsolete steam-engines and dynamos ; but it wont scrap its old prejudices and its old moralities and its old religions and its old political constitutions. What's the result ? In machinery it does very well ; but in morals and religion and politics it is working at a loss that brings it nearer bankruptcy every year."

It is precisely one of the most hopeful features of

our age that so many are saying, or listening to, these things: for the first time in sixteen hundred years. You could not say or listen to these things before, because everybody was convinced that, while man made engines, the gods made religions and moralities and political constitutions. This broad and penetrating culture of our time which we call science, which Shaw despises, has taught us that man made the religions and moralities and political constitutions as well as the engines, and it has restored our mastery of them.

The distinctive thing in our age is, not that we do not demand a reform of traditions as well as machinery, but that there is so tremendous and world-wide a demand for reform. A recent German work which violently demands a reform of religious traditions has sold three-quarters of a million copies in England and Germany, and circulates in twenty languages. The demand for a reform of moral traditions is less conspicuous because, as I showed, it is paradoxical and confusing. Men like Shaw who breathe dreadful threats against morality turn out to be amongst our most austere moralists. In sex-morals alone is there a clear issue, and the demand for greater freedom and reform in this direction may be measured by the vast influence of the writers who advocate it in every country in Europe. For a hundred years a high proportion of the poets, dramatists, and novelists of Europe have openly advocated alteration of the sex-standard in morals, and their influence has been, and is, enormous. While, as to our political constitutions, it is only Shaw's pessimistic estimate of democracy which prevents him from seeing how they have been revolutionised in the last hundred years.

There might be a danger in telling our contemporaries that we are proceeding in this revision of our traditions far faster than men ever proceeded before, but Shaw's pessimism does not seem to be part of a deliberate policy. He is so impatient and impetuous that he will not study the historical facts, or calmly appraise such as are within his knowledge. It is part of his usefulness. Only a white-hot man can make others white-hot. But it is interesting to reflect that his incandescence is largely due to false estimates. I have in an earlier chapter shown that this is the case generally in his appreciation of modern England, or modern times. To point out the evils of our time you do not need to study history, but Shaw wants to say a great deal more than this. He wants to bully us into believing that we have made no progress at all; even that we are getting "nearer bankruptcy every year." In this he shows a hardy indifference to an exact determination of the facts; but there are always Englishmen who think the new patriotism is to libel your country, and he is applauded without discrimination.

It is the same with his assault on the middle class. He does not, of course, confine his criticism to that class, and hold up the manual workers as their virtuous victims. In a recent pronouncement, a preface to Brieux's "Woman on Her Own," he expresses much the same feeling as he had done forty years before. "Brieux," he says, with evident approval, "shows you the working man as selfish, foul-mouthed, ill-behaved, and violent, objecting far more to the woman's capacity, orderliness, and industry than to her weaknesses; jealous of her attempts to do without him, and afraid of being dominated by her in industry, where he cannot resort to his fists, as he often does in



his home." The working man would probably resent this description of his attitude as warmly as the middle class would resent Shaw's description of their characters and domestic life. It betrays Shaw's proneness to describe a man only by his defects: it ignores the fact that the workers form the only political party which has given general support to the women for whose gratification Shaw wrote these words, that recent efforts of women Trade Unionists to improve their condition have had the support of male Trade Unionists, and that the real root of the jealousy, such as it is, is the already overcrowded condition of the labour market and the willingness of women to accept low wages.

The same partiality and injustice are found in Shaw's attack on the middle class. It is not wholly clear why an opponent or disdainer of democracy should blame the middle class for capturing the democratic machinery. They might plead that they were guarding the State from the inherent risks of an uneducated democracy. If it be objected that certain middle-class cliques have cornered the administration, one may ask, as Carlyle might have been asked when he thundered against democracy's statesmen seventy years ago, where the alternatives are. Carlyle hesitatingly suggested Robert Burns: Shaw is content with general railing at the existing ruling class. I have, however, pointed out that in this he is doing little more than building on the foolish legend that English statesmen "muddle through" everything. Here it is only necessary to add that he displays a complete insensibility to all that the middle class has done for the workers during the last ninety years. During the earlier half of that time nearly every advance in the direction of general education, en-

franchisement, and reform, all over Europe, was initiated and chiefly won by the middle class. Shaw himself has, in fact, relied all his life on the middle class to adopt and enforce his ideas of reform, and has had comparatively little influence with the manual workers.

It is very difficult to make allowance for his exaggerations and discover how far he has had an influence in fostering resentment of real grievances. If we set aside his purely artistic gifts and his immense popularity as a humorist and fantasist—set them aside only because he would not wish to be judged by the possession of these gifts, but by his use of them—we are compelled to classify him, in so far as he has been and is a power, as a critic. With violence, exaggeration, satire, persiflage, libel, scorn, and laughter he has drawn our attention to the problems which still confront us. The home, for instance, is a problem, and a grave problem; and there has been too common a practice of concealing its disorders under romantic perversions. Shaw has done more, perhaps, than any other artist of our time to make thoughtful people realise the need of reform. The homes he has put before us on the stage are unreal, and the majority of folk laugh when they return to the reality of their comfortable firesides, but every candid and sincere student of social matters knows that there are large numbers of homes in which the heavy strain of life-long companionship leads to courtesy, surliness, and hypocritical pretence of harmony; many homes, indeed, in which the romantic ideal has completely failed and the relations of parents to each other and to the children are lamentable. Ampler facilities for divorce will remedy much of this, but we are too apt to reconcile our-

selves to a burden, especially if it does not fall on our own shoulders, once it has been lightened. Some future generation will provide for those who are unfit for, or reluctant to venture upon, life-long intimacy, and will see in Shaw one of the most outspoken pioneers of reform in an age when such a reform was still widely unpopular.

Similarly, his caricatures and exaggerations have begotten a resentment of much of the lighter hypocrisy of domestic life ; the costly and petty snobbishness, the pretences of display beyond one's means, the vanity which expresses itself in magazines of furniture or troops of servants, the stubborn retention of ancient points of view in a new age, the sheep-like docility to fashions set by our grandfathers, the impermeability to new ideas apart from trade and engineering, the false standards of judgment—a score of really foolish, yet widespread, habits which hinder reform and prolong the life of illusions and disorders. A generation which makes little effort to break these traditions, and which bears with equanimity the burden of militarism, crime, disease, and squalid poverty, must expect the salutary lash of its prophets. If they call us a "brood of vipers," we may remember that it is the way of prophets. The filament of carbon in the electric circuit cannot give light without a violent rise of its temperature. Shaw's fund of humour and volatility of imagination enabled him to spend this heat in amusing caricature. But, when the laugh is over, many—it would be hard to say how many—have reflected on the critical truth in the caricature.

That he has done more than shake us, and make us think, it would be bold to claim. His constructive suggestions have not had much influence : certainly

beyond his service in spreading middle-class or Fabian Socialism. At times he seems content to think that he has done critical work. "Construction," he says, "cumbers the ground with institutions made by busy-bodies. Destruction clears it, and gives us breathing space and liberty." Once I observed to a friend of Shaw's that I appreciated him as a vigorous poker of the mental fire of our generation. "That," he replied, "is all that Shaw claims to be." Certainly it is as useful a work as one can do. People need to be unsettled before they will candidly examine a constructive ideal.

But no man with imagination can restrict himself to destructive work. We do not scrap our steam-engines, to use Shaw's illustration, until we have a design of better: we do not part with moralities and polities, whatever we do as to religions (which are statements about another world), until we find and approve a new pattern. The alternative to war is plain, but what is the alternative to marriage? Crime and poverty are repellent diseases of the social body, but what is the remedy? In fact, you cannot definitely criticise current habits and institutions, unless you have in mind alternative habits and institutions; you cannot lash people for their inertness if you know no more than they how to act. So Shaw was bound to be constructive, and his whole literary and dramatic output is informed by a positive philosophy.

Here I venture to say that he has failed. His facility of imagination ruined him. He is not a cold intellectual machine, but a very warm and rich imaginative mechanism. In point of fact, few adopt even the single conclusions which he regards as important, and hardly any adopt all of them. Aiming

at stimulation, and desiring the assertion of personality, he is not likely to be disappointed that there is no Shavian school, making a creed of the body of opinions of the master. But the several ideas which he has adopted or conceived have not had a much better fate.

In the main idea of his philosophy—if one give this title by courtesy to the collection of his opinions—the belief that a Life-Force is working upward through the organic world, he is by no means isolated, because he is by no means original. It is a very old controversy in science and philosophy, and has been recently revived in an acute form. This revival is not in the smallest degree due to Mr Shaw. Inexpert people may take some notice of Sir Oliver Lodge or of Professor Bergson, who are popularising Vitalism, but it is not even they who have given real life to the old controversy. It is because a group of able scientists on the continent (Driesch, Reinke, etc), and a few prominent scientists in Britain (Thomson, Geddes, etc.), have recently put forward a new defence of it. One can discover easily how little influence Shaw has had in the revival (to some extent) of Vitalism. His distinctive idea is that this Life-Force has “purposes,” and that, if man will not co-operate with, or carry out, the designs which it inspires in the brains of our abler thinkers, the human race will be superseded and some “lower animal” made the monarch of the earth. The known facts of development justify us in saying that this is an absurdity, and people only smile at Mr Shaw’s foreboding. In fact, if the purposes of the Life-Force are only known as they appear in the minds of men, you get at once such a confusion of designs (in the minds of different prophets) that humanity might well despair of even finding the right road.

Mr Shaw naturally assumes that the particular conception of life which has grown in his mind is *the* message of the Life-Force. In this, of course, there is no element of conceit. No man has a right to press opinions unless he is convinced they are true. Each of us is, to ourselves, the unique temple of truth. What it is relevant to notice here is that Shaw is again in a very isolated position. In effect, we are divided into three classes. Some think happiness in the next world the supreme ideal: some think happiness in this world: and the majority are content with happiness in both. Shaw is almost *contra mundum*, a new Baptist in the wilds of Hertfordshire, in proclaiming that happiness is not the ideal at all. He is, it is true, not consistent; the position is psychologically impossible. The living machinery has been evolved on the lines of seeking comfort and avoiding pain, and it cannot undo the work of millions of years in an hour of perverse philosophy. Consider Shaw's most splendid revelation of his personality:

“This is the true joy in life, the being used for a purpose recognised by yourself as a mighty one; the being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap-heap; the being a force of Nature instead of a feverish, selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy.”

Andrew Undershaft—in this connection Bernard Shaw—found his “joy” in strenuous work, in preaching the gospel, in living on locusts and wild honey. He advises others to seek “joy” where he has found it. It is Browning’s gospel of work: it is William Watson’s praise of

“The deeper transport and the mightier thrill
Than comes of commerce with mortality.”

But it is, in the end, a recommendation that you will find happiness in this high work. Moreover, it is a gospel for a few, not for the many ; and even the few do not find it necessary to embrace asceticism as a condition of doing much work.

On the face of it, Shaw's hostility to hedonism puts him in helpless opposition to the most powerful current of modern life. His reasons for this opposition are too frail and mystical, or too personal, to weigh with more than a very few. Claiming to be the most modern of modernists, the most drastic rebel against traditions, he repeats venerable old puritanical phrases about " lust " and " sterile pleasure," and he depreciates sensuousness with the zest of a Neo-Platonist or a monk of the Thebaid. Most characteristic of all is the application of his principles to the relations of men and women. After marching so far in the company of the mystics and ascetics, he turns round and derides their virtue of chastity, and insists that a woman shall have children when she wills, without blessing of Church or State. When this heresy is in danger of attracting " free lovers " to his standard, he tells them to go, if they are so weak and sensual, and burn their fingers with their free love. Most of those who are in general agreement with him—Socialists and Rationalists—enter respectfully into matrimony, but decline to burden their homes and overcrowd their professions by bringing babies into the world every year. Shaw's flail descends on them with more vigour than ever. It is the last and most damnable transgression to cohabit for pleasure ; and it is one of the distinguishing features of the world to which Shaw belongs. Only a few of the more eccentric advocates of the simple life can follow his elusive reasoning, while from the body of devout

Christians, who would agree with his conclusion, he cuts himself off with the intimidating sword of blasphemy. Many women to-day would agree with him that they have as much right as men to deliberately seek and attract partners, but they are not prepared to admit that this is merely because they are the passive instruments of an imperious Life-Force ; many men would agree that they are reluctant to marry, but they do not attribute the reluctance to some inner craving to mirror the purposes of the cosmic will. Shaw, in a word, stands almost alone in his more distinctive opinions.

Constructively, it is in the Socialist field alone that he has laboured with some success. Eugenists do not show a very marked delight at his adoption of their creed, since he at once gives it an expression that is not calculated to attract the general public. Anti-Vivisectionists are proud of his company and thrilled by his power of vituperation, but he goes too far for them. The recent agitation against the public exhibition of trained animals has sought his support (December 1913), but he has only made their work seem foolish by declaring that it does not matter two pins whether the animals were trained by means of cruelty or not. Advocates of the endowment of motherhood boast of his support, but they have to conceal the fact that he equally advocates the endowment of babies and burglars. Even in his Socialism, we saw, he outsoars Bellamy himself, and makes ardent working-class Socialists "gasp." They put to his credit only the work of his early manhood, and the influence he has had in building up the Fabian Society.

It seems, then, that in tracing his influence we must acknowledge that he has been a brilliant failure

as a constructive thinker and must count him only as a wholesome stimulating and thought-provoking agency in the life of his time. He challenges everything, satirises everybody, tilts at virtue and vice with equal vigour, mocks at every 'ism' (even Shavianism) that any man or woman ventures to set up. He despises sweet reasonableness as a method of propaganda. Reformers of that type are the salt of the earth; it needs pepper as well. Sneezing is a healthy exercise for sluggish brains. The method has its defects. If you tell an average body of men and women that their homes are dreary bear-gardens, hung with curtains of hypocrisy, that their country is one of the silliest and most criminal under the sun, and that their age has not even reached the mark of previous civilisations, they are apt to conclude, on examining the facts, not that there is some serious truth in what you say, but that lying is your peculiar form of humour. It is predominantly as a humorist that Shaw has found a public. His biographers greatly exaggerate his serious influence. But there are many now in every audience that gathers to hear him speak, or to witness his latest comedy, who catch the general lesson of bold, independent thinking and distrust of tradition. In enlarging this proportion of the general public, in breaking down the prejudice against the problem-play, and in his influence on the younger school of living dramatists, one finds his greatest service.

It cannot be denied, however, that it is as an artist, in the sense of the word which he resents, that he has won world-wide recognition. In lecturing on the prophets of modern Europe at the Antipodes I have found thoughtful audiences roused to peculiar attention when I came to speak of Shaw; and it is

the same in the United States, where his plays have had a great success. On the continent his success has been slow in coming, as in England, but he is now known throughout Europe as one of the first dramatic artists of this country. I may borrow from the works of Hamon and Julius Bab a brief account of his European triumph.

Shaw became known to a few in Germany by a translation of the "Fabian Essays" in 1897. In the previous year, however, he had bitterly offended German Socialists by his criticism of their leaders, and, as his early dramas were failures in England, he remained little known for a number of years. In 1902 William Archer enlisted the interest of the Viennese dramatist Trebitsch, who translated into German "Candida," "Arms and the Man," and "The Devil's Disciple." The last of these plays was produced at Vienna, and its peculiar art led to some discussion. The other plays followed, and "Candida" was performed at Dresden in the same year (1903), and at Berlin, by a distinguished company, in 1904. George Brandes, the famous critic and Rationalist, fought for the recognition of Shaw's dramatic ability, and the "Young Germans" loudly applauded what seemed to be the Nietzschean element in his work. Just at that time, moreover, came announcements of his definitive success in England and the United States, where Arnold Daly and Richard Mansfield presented him to crowded houses throughout 1903 and 1904. His success in Germany was, however, far from assured, and the plays that were presented in 1905 and 1906, especially "Cæsar and Cleopatra," were severely criticised. In 1907 "Mrs Warren's Profession," "The Philanderers," and "The Doctor's Dilemma" were produced, and the German public

was gradually won. Shaw had the advantage in Germany of being sharply dissociated from the Socialists. The "Vorwärts" renewed the quarrel about his criticisms of Socialists, and Shaw made a virulent and lengthy reply in the *Berliner Tageblatt*. The thunder of the Socialist organ would, if anything, recommend Shaw to the ordinary play-going public. In any case, he is now received with deep respect and delight in the chief cities of Austria and Germany.

From the Germanic lands his fame soon spread over the continent, though he is only now winning recognition in the Latin countries. By 1907 he was well known in Norway, Sweden, and Denmark, where the relation to Ibsen was appreciated, in Holland and Poland, and at St Petersburg. Hamon says that of seventeen of Shaw's plays which were known on the continent by the end of 1912, sixteen were played in the Scandinavian and Germanic countries, ten in the Slav countries, and only two in the Latin countries. France, whose artistic repute Shaw has always derided, was very slow to appreciate him. In M. and Mme. Hamon, two French Socialists, he has found devoted and sympathetic interpreters, and Hamon has laboured hard to induce the French to see in Shaw "the Molière of the twentieth century." He has not as yet had the success he desires, though the public which Brieux has created in France should be of use. "Candida" had been played at Brussels with great success in 1907, and in the spring of 1908 it was presented at Paris. It failed, and little more was heard of Shaw until 1912, when "Mrs Warren's Profession" was played, with a more satisfactory result. It secured seventy performances. The Hamons are now engaged in translating the whole series of plays, but the French theatre is still coy.

It is curious that one of the plays which has been most warmly received on the continent should be "Mrs Warren's Profession." It has been presented nearly a hundred times in Berlin and in St Petersburg, seventy times in Paris, and several times in Spain and Italy. One of the latest advices, of Shavian interest, is that it, on November 19th, "scored a tremendous success" on its first performance in Venice, and was acclaimed as "a great drama of social life." This success, it is true, had been prepared by the indiscretion of the Venetian puritans, who placarded the city with a warning that it was unfit for respectable people. It has, however, had a remarkable success on the continent, where, as is, well known, public opinion does not, on the whole, take a very dark view of that particular profession. A cynic might suggest that it is the caricature of English character which recommends it to foreigners, but the success seems to be partly due to its Socialistic theory, that economic inequalities drive women to prostitution, and partly (or mainly) to its dramatic qualities. There, as in England and America, Shaw is appreciated—beyond the nucleus of serious social thinkers—as a master of humour, a brilliant writer of dialogue, an original and piquant creator of character, and a vividly imaginative inventor of situations.

Whatever be the real extent of his influence in either stimulating or shaping the thought of his generation, he can look back with such pride as his asceticism will permit on his artistic triumph. More than thirty years ago he set out to win the ear of the British public. Twenty years later there can have been few who believed in his prospect of success, and certainly none who could foresee that within another ten years his plays would be translated into many tongues and

his name would be familiar from St Petersburg to California. In his darkest hours he made no concession ; the Englishman was a stubborn, stupid, vicious mule, and it was Shaw's business in life to tell him so. That lesson is inculcated from the first act of "Widowers' Houses" to the last phrase of "Great Catherine." When people began to regard the familiar dogma as a joke, and think any form of Shavian entertainment incomplete without it, he wrote long prefaces and gave many interviews to prove that he really meant what he said. Yet he has lived to see the public flock to every new play he announces, and he must know that, apart from popular political orators, there is not a speaker in England who attracts more eager crowds.

It is a great and deserved triumph. From the dingy rooms and hopeless labour of Osnaburgh Street he has passed to the higher artistic fellowship of the world. From the journalistic defence of Ibsen and Tolstoi he has gone on to surpass the one in popularity and the other in real influence. And he remains the same fearless, outspoken, uncompromising critic, and genial, generous, and helpful personality, as he was thirty years ago. Of his private generosity no man can tell, nor would he like any man to tell. His public generosity is notorious. Few movements with which he has any sympathy do not receive his aid as generously as in his early manhood, and even movements with which he has no sympathy are cheerfully assisted when they approach a task which interests him. Wealth and honour have not corroded his iron character. Whoever wielded a lance beside him in the grim fights of thirty years ago is still publicly saluted as "my friend —"; whoever, in his opinion, shirked the fight to which his principles pledged him

is bitterly condemned. His town-house, in Adelphi Terrace, and his country house, near Letchworth, are centres of insurgent sentiment, yet full of gaiety and good-fellowship when his old companions in arms or his new European colleagues gather about him.

He is still, in his fifty-seventh year, in the prime of life. The reddish beard and hair have turned a brownish grey, which makes him look less fiery and pugnacious, and his strong face and piercing blue-grey eyes seem to have changed with his strategy ; they laugh, even when he scolds, except at moments when some supposed deeper guilt of our age stirs him to anger. His tall and fairly broad figure stands quite erect, a little stiff, the hands clasped behind his back or impulsively thrust out in some inartistic gesture. His strong, fluent, rather metallic voice, still clearly bearing an Irish accent, rolls easily through the largest building. He knows no tricks of modulation, but has a naturally pleasing delivery ; he disdains all rules of elocution or deliberate rhetoric, but his eyes smile at his jokes, and his voice grows stern and his figure rigid as he tells the facts which he thinks it proper to denounce. He dresses, on the platform, in a closely buttoned dark jacket-suit, and hates to lay aside his fine woollen shirts for starched armour. But he knows that England has adopted him as a humorist, and he genially gratifies the crowd before him, especially by retailing his repertory jokes about the Englishman ; in which he is not punctilious about accuracy. I sat beside him on a platform some time ago when he was in this mood. He spoke of early associates who had led him to truth : "not Englishmen, of course," he said, mentioning Stuart Glennie. The audience gave the usual laugh, but in my mind were the names of Captain

Wilson and other Englishmen of the Zetetic Society, which he suppressed, to say nothing of Samuel Butler.

In private he is not the perennial fount of wit which many suppose. You might talk to him for hours and not discover that he was one of the masters of humour. He does not bubble with spontaneous wit like, for instance, H. G. Wells; though in the company of his intimate friends he loves boisterous joking and telling perverse or exaggerated stories against them or himself. He lives, of course, simply, soberly, and strenuously. "Man," he still says, "is the only animal which esteems itself rich in proportion to the number and voracity of its parasites"; and he will have nothing superfluous or ostentatious about him. Since 1898 he has had a companion of his fine and simple tastes in Mrs Shaw, whose character is delineated with great charm and admiration, for those who are aware of it, in a well-known recent novel.

He likes England and the English, for all their faults. "I should never have done anything without you," says Doyle to Broadbent in "John Bull's Other Island," "although I never stop wondering at that blessed old head of yours, with all its ideas in watertight compartments." In the preface he so far forgets his analysis of English and Irish character as to say that England taught him to know realities. He has never known realities. He has lived in a world of imagination and prejudice, and, if to that we owe the amusing series of his plays, it has perverted his philosophy of life. One cannot say that he would be happier if he were a realist, for he is a happy man, but he might have avoided much pessimism and had a deeper influence. He knows no languages but French and a little German, disdains science and

seems to read older history only for the specific purpose of some composition, and is a biased observer. These things have restricted the truth and added to the piquancy and vigour of his message. However we may judge that, he has set a noble example of the dedication of great gifts to what he believed to be the highest service of man ; he has been an honest man in a world where reticence, or even cowardice, is too often the condition of success ; and the work he has already done, and will, it is hoped, do for one or two decades yet, entitle him to have the words of Under-shaft set against his name in the book of life.

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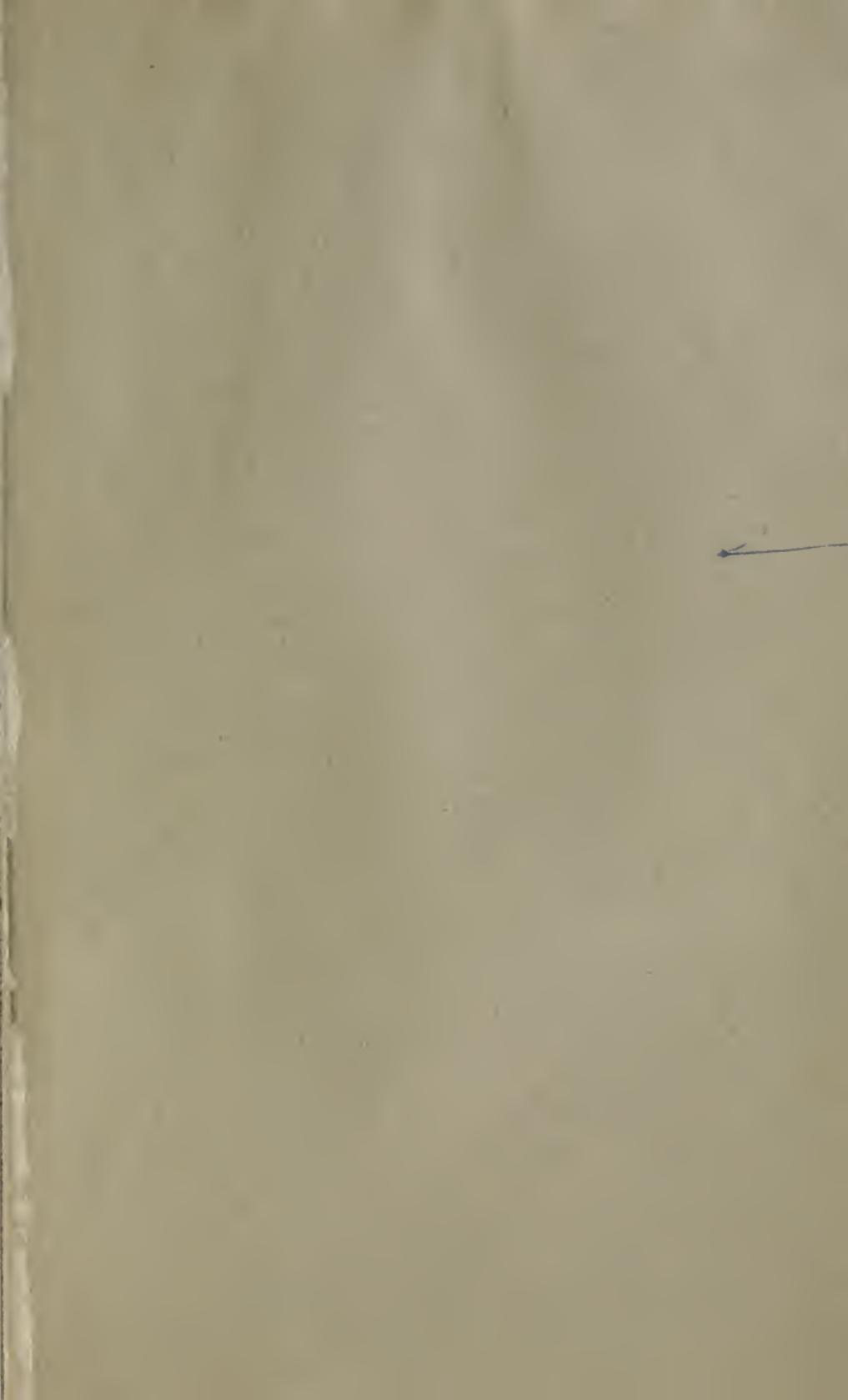
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